CONTEMPORARY INUIT POLITICAL IDENTITY AND TRANSNATIONAL PROCESSES

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## Abstract

Understanding how local political identities are shaped by transnational networks can produce insight into the relationships among global processes, local identities, and the state. This ethnographic exploration of circumpolar transnational processes provides an understanding of the social and cultural factors influencing political identity among the Inuit of the United States. I ask how the local Alaska branch of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC-AK) connects to a broader transnational Indigenous network, and how those networks influence Inuit political identity locally and globally. The following thesis suggests that, despite an increase in cultural influences across national borders due to globalization, political identities remain tied to local and national influences. Moreover, the transnational movements of local political identities may be impeded by national borders and State regulations, revealing the continued importance of the nation-state, rather than its demise in an increasingly globalized world.

Table of Contents

Page

List of Figures

# List of Appendices

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

An exploration of circumpolar transnational processes can provide insight into the social and cultural factors influencing political identity among culture groups, in the case of this project, the Inuit of the United States. The following thesis seeks to answer some key questions about how the local Alaska branch of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC-AK) connects to broader transnational Indigenous networks, and how those networks affect Inuit political identity. The characteristics of the relationship between ICC-AK, the transnational Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) organization, and the role that Inuit culture plays in these networks are considered as well as the significance of the relationship between the nation-state and Inuit political identity. Of ultimate concern is how these elements impact Inuit political identity and the Inuit relationship with the state. The increase in awareness of Arctic issues, such as resource development and Arctic marine shipping, as well as the impacts felt from actions taking place in southern latitudes, has caused eyes located outside the north to turn to those living in the circumpolar region.

Specifically, the Inuit who have long called the Arctic home are viewed less as timeless, Stone Age people, but as major players and active participants in the current affairs impacting the circumpolar region. They have established themselves politically as people with a vested interest in what happens in the Arctic, shown by their presence on various committees and working groups focused on finding solutions to Arctic issues, both governmental and non-governmental. At the national and international levels Inuit

have become a people that require attention when decisions are being made concerning the North. Governments and resource developers are called on to consider Inuit, economically, politically, and culturally, when proposing to conduct business or create industry in the North.

Exploring transnational processes and Inuit political identity means that insight is gained into the phenomenon producing the current Inuit presence on the global stage. How is it that the image of an archaic Arctic Inuit has made the transition to a globally recognized politically involved people? By presenting a particular Inuit political identity to the rest of the world and forcing other world players to recognize the Inuit position on issues in the Arctic, means Inuit shape and are shaped by processes that span nations. The contemporary Inuit push for sovereignty and self-determination draw on a belief in shared culture across nations, but the ties that bind are not just found in cultural beliefs, but are rooted deep in pre-historic beginnings.

The contemporary distribution of Inuit in the circumpolar region is based on a long history of movement into and adaptation to the region, resulting in a far flung geographic occupation. Archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic evidence shows that Inuit today are descended from a migration of peoples from Asia occurring 7,000 to 6,000 years ago (Chance 1990; Schweitzer and Lee 1997). Language evidence supports the contention of a "unified Arctic Culture" (Schweitzer and Lee 1997:29), and can show the spread of this group of people. The early migrant population, referred to as the

"Aleut-Eskimo", spoke a language called Eska-Aleutian, a linguistic family separated into Aleut and Eskimo.

The evidence suggests that Aleut and Eskimo diverged more than 4,000 years ago. This thesis is primarily concerned with the Eskimo branch of peoples that led to the existence of Inuit in the Arctic. Eskimo further subdivided into Inuit and Yup'ik (Chance 1990; Schweitzer and Lee 1997). The Yup'ik branch contains five languages: the two found only in Alaska are called Central Yup'ik and Alutiiq, while the two in Russia are called Naukanski and Sirenikski; Siberian Yup'ik is spoken both in Russia and Alaska (Schweitzer and Lee 1997:39). Inuit languages are described as closely related dialects that range from the Bering Strait through Alaska, Canada, and into Greenland, with Alaskan dialects referred to as Iñupiaq, eastern Canadian called Inuktituk, and Greenlandic called Kalaallit, but it should be noted that for those on either end of the geographic continuum the dialects are less mutually intelligible (Chance 1990; Schweitzer and Lee 1997). Figure 1.1 is an adaptation of the larger University of Alaska Native Language Center's language diagram representing Alaska Native languages, and shows Aleut-Eskimo language family connections.

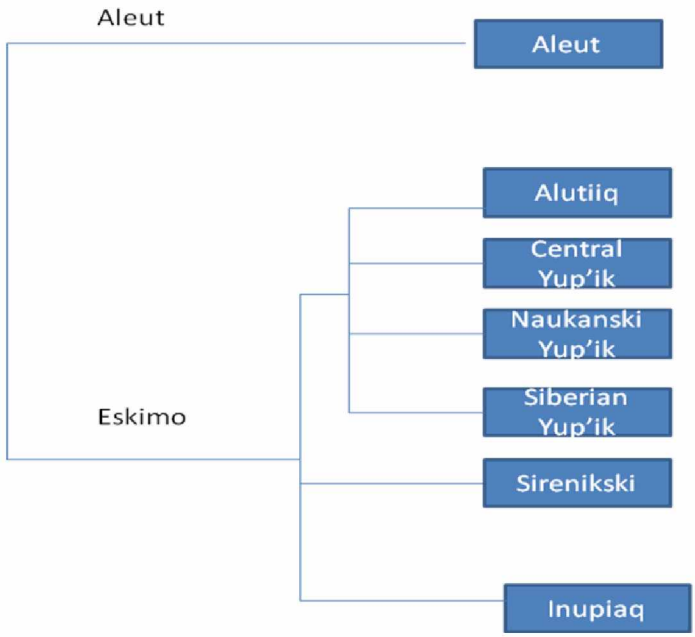


Figure 1.1 Aleut-Eskimo Language Diagram (University of Alaska Fairbanks Native Language Center http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/groups/ accessed July 14, 2012)

The archaeological evidence highlights the different technological waves across the region during the pre-historic period. The various excavated sites across the circumpolar North reveal the shift in cultural technology throughout time. The stone artifacts found at Cape Denbigh, Alaska point to Asian Neolithic connections, and can be found as far as northwest Canada. These artifacts are thought to predate the St. Lawrence Island cultures, Okvik (ca. 500 B.C.) and Old Bering Sea (300B.C.-A.D. 100). A site at Point Hope, Alaska, Ipiutak (ca. A.D. 500-1000) and the Old Bering Sea sites show connections to Siberian Neolithic sites, called the Birnirk phase (A.D. 500-900), while artifacts found on Punuk Island show connections to modern Eskimo hunting specialization. The Thule period (A.D. 900-1500) spanned the Arctic from Alaska to

Greenland and immediately precedes today's Eskimos, and indicates a Thule migration eastward where they encountered the Dorset people, occupants of Greenland since 2,000 B.C. It is the cultural continuity, represented by the use of *kayaks* to facilitate sea travel and toggle-headed harpoons for hunting sea mammals, the building of semi-subterranean houses, the use of oil lamps, and skin covered drums within the region that supports the argument that contemporary Inuit are related to the earlier cultural traditions that inhabited the region. Furthermore, the cultural similarities of Inuit across the region today indicate a unified culture (Chance 1990; McGhee 2005; Schweitzer and Lee 1997). I should note here that the term "Eskimo" is problematic and is something I discuss further in this chapter under the section exploring the ICC.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries colonial expansion spread across the region, British from the east and Russia from the west. Both nations were venturing forth in search of valuable natural resources, such as furs and whale products. Without the space here to enter into extensive detail concerning this period I wish to abbreviate my look at this phase. I will not describe in detail the various historical figures and events that had an impact on Eskimo peoples during this era of European expansion (see Brody 1991; Chance 1990; McGhee 2005; Schweitzer and Lee 1997), I wish rather to highlight the impacts of the encounters, such as the diseases brought with the capitalists, the changes due to missionary activities, and the transformations assimilation policy forced on Eskimo peoples.

Initial trade relations between incoming southerners were positive in the sense that Eskimo were enthusiastic traders with the whalers, and later fur traders. They acquired goods such as "guns and ammunition, metal pots and pans, knives and stoves, kerosene lamps, sewing-machines and portable phonographs" (McGhee 2005:241), in exchange for Eskimo labor. Eskimo men were skilled whale hunters and employed by European whalers, as well as supplying them with caribou meat and skins for winter clothing, which were then sewn by Eskimo women (McGhee 2005). Robert McGhee notes, "to many Arctic natives the whaling era is looked on nostalgically as a time when their ancestors were valued partners in a lucrative global industry" (2005:242). The next wave of southern migration into the North occurred in the mid-nineteenth century with the discovery of gold in the North American Subarctic that drew miners into the interior regions of the Yukon, Alaska, and Chukotka. With the miners came policing and law enforcement from southern centers, which was the first step in the establishment of hegemonic relationship between Eskimo peoples and the governments that came to claim the lands they occupy.

Law enforcement was not the only form of encroachment based on morals from south to north. The collapse of the whaling industry in the early twentieth century was followed by the rise of the fur industry. The European interest in Arctic fox meant increased material wealth for Eskimo trappers. Along with the economic pursuits of southerners came those with missionizing goals (McGhee 2005, Brody 1991; Chance 1990). Christian missionaries in the north were not only interested in converting the

Eskimo peoples, but also sought to "civilize" them, instilling "proper" moral values in a people "defiled and demoralized by whalers and traders" (Chance 1990:45). The missionaries created schools, tended to medical and health matters, and provided economic support, all of which helped in the conversion process. With the missionaries, traders and miners came epidemic diseases. The Eskimo peoples had little defense against the diseases originating in the south, and frequent waves of illness succeeded in reducing population numbers drastically, "In Chukotka and Alaska, death rates of between 50 percent and 80 percent were reported from many areas during the gold-rush period of the late nineteenth century, and the Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta were almost eradicated by the measles epidemic of 1902" (McGhee 2005:245). McGhee speculates that the severe results of epidemic disease helped Eskimo peoples accept new systems of authority imposed by the southern institutions (2005:246), meaning there was little opposition to the encroachment of resource extraction and industrial enterprises that would begin during the 1930s.

The southern governments gave little thought to the original inhabitants of the region, and adopted a program that called for development of local natural resources, resulting in exploitation of these inhabitants. Incursions continued into the 1950s and 1960s, when the political milieu at the time, the civil rights and environmental movements, prompted political responses from Inuit. The impetus for unifying politically was often the plans for major resource development projects. In Alaska it was the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay in 1968 and the subsequent plans to extract it that

caused the Iñupiat to be concerned with their continued use of lands they had inhabited for thousands of years. But, Eskimo peoples throughout the circumpolar region were also feeling the pressure from resource development projects and southern governments, leading to a coming together among the four national Inuit groups to form a united front.

The shared issues and priorities of the four ICC branch offices reflect the shared colonial encounter. Each national office directs its energies towards priorities that can be traced to relationships established during early colonization. The colonial encounter appears similarly among the various national Inuit entities, which becomes salient when discussing the cross-national ties under a pan-Inuit political identity.

## 1.1 What are Transnational Processes?

One cannot adequately attempt to deconstruct transnational processes without understanding them as part of globalization processes. There are as many different definitions for the term as there are fields of study, but at the basic level "Globalization" can be defined as "the increasing flow of trade, finance, culture, ideas, and people brought about by the sophisticated technology of communications and travel and by the worldwide spread of neoliberal capitalism, and it is the local and regional adaptations to and resistance against these flows" (Lewellen 2002:7-8). The elements from this definition that are important to this thesis relate to the flow of culture, ideas, and people, through communication and travel, with an emphasis on local and regional adaptations. In a globalized world, transnational connections impact local political identities, producing altered relationships with the nation-states in which they exist. The pursuit of

the question of how local political identities are shaped by transnational networks can produce insights into the relationships among global processes, local identities, and the state. The links between individual networks have expanded in part due to globalization processes; through mobility and increased cross-border and cross-cultural interactions (Mau 2010:142). This thesis looks specifically at the issue of transnational processes experienced by one particular culture that exists predominantly in the circumpolar region.

The circumpolar region is interesting, not just due to physical geography and environment, but because like many regions in the world, it contains cultures that share connections pre-dating European contact and colonial expansion (Chance 1990). These cultural connections continue today, spanning multiple nations, and are expressed by such organizations as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), which states "We Eskimo are an international community sharing common language, culture, and a common land along the Arctic coast of Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. Although not a nation-state, as a people, we do constitute a nation" (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2012a). This statement reflects the ideology influencing contemporary Inuit political identity. I believe it is important to investigate how this ideology transcends national boundaries and explore how state responses figure in the construction of political identity. Norman Chance, while describing the emergence of the ICC notes:

> [The] effort to unite all of the circumpolar peoples was perceived by Eben Hopson and other ICC leaders as one of immense importance for it not only extended the ideal of local

> and regional self-determination to its fullest international extent, but it affirmed the desirability of establishing a viable northern Native political entity able to transcend the artificial boundaries imposed by the western nations. [Chance 1990:180]

This observation prompts the question: what is the relationship between ICC's role as representative organization in particular states and the transnational networks that function simultaneously? The answer may be that it is through transnational ties that the ICC is able to form a politically relevant body recognized by states as having authority in relation to issues impacting the North. Before this question can be explored further I need to present discussion describing my particular use of the term "transnational".

Transnationality has been extensively discussed in a variety of fields. From geography to law, many disciplines have described different applications of this perspective (Briggs et al. 2008; Szanton Blanc et al. 1995; Vertovec 2009). Stephen Vertovec describes transnational processes as "sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states" (Vertovec 2009:2). Furthermore, transnational processes arising from increased global contact increase the "extent, intensity, velocity and impact of global interconnectedness across a broad range of human domains" (Vertovec 2009:2). As the prefix "trans" denotes, these elements move across national boundaries, existing in multiple states. M. Kearney relates transnational processes to anthropology in the following way:

> The 'nation' in transnational usually refers to the territorial, social, and cultural aspects of the nations concerned. Implicit in anthropological studies of transnational processes is the work of the 'state', as for example the guardian of national borders, the arbiter of citizenship, and the entity responsible for foreign policy. [1995:548]

Kearney, writing in the mid-1990s, goes on to describe a shift in anthropology from general theory to a pronounced global focus. In his view this theory and research focus shift moved from a centre-periphery investigation involving sharp national boundaries, to an unbounded one that sees nations less as components in larger processes (Kearney 1995:549). In contradistinction, others (such as Wilson and Donnan 1998) argue for an anthropology focused on national borders. In their view, an anthropology of borders can remind " social scientists outside the discipline, and some within it, that nations and states, and their institutions, are composed of people who cannot or should not be reduced to the images which are constructed by the state, the media or of any other groups who wish to represent them" (Wilson and Donnan 1998:4). While they acknowledge the existence of borders, they also note their permeability, attempts by people to build political divides based on them, and the state's rigid response through control of cultural fields that cross their borders (Wilson and Donnan 1998:4), suggesting that it is important to recognize the continued existence of national borders and state authority the nation-state has over citizens.

David Held et al. succinctly explains the role of global politics and the nation-state today as challenging previously understood differences between domestic and international politics:

> Although governments and states remain, of course, powerful actors, they now share the global arena with an array of other agencies and organizations. Non-state actors or transnational bodies, such as multinational corporations, transnational pressure groups, transnational professional associations, social movements and so on, also participate intensively in global politics. [1999:50]

In a globalized world with transnational political networks pushing for changes at local levels it can seem that relationships between identity, nationalism, nation-states, and social movements are at times non-relevant with regard to a global understanding of cultural processes. When considering Transnational Social Movements (TSMs) and their relationship to nation-states the matter becomes even more tenuous. TSMs operate across nations and states to achieve movement goals. Louis Kriesberg notes five ways in which TSMs reinforce the trends necessary for them to operate at the global level. These include: 1) supporting social networks that make up the infrastructure for action; 2) promoting intergovernmental organizations; 3) managing resources and their distribution; 4) cultivating new transnational identities; and 5) supporting other TSMs in their confrontation of other transnational issues (1997:14).

## 1.2 IPOs, TSMs, TSMOs, NGOs and ISMs

Guidry et al. note that social movements "ride the waves of...global processes and formations; in turn, they begin to define new ways of understanding how the world is being transformed...to the extent that globalization appears to reduce the ability of states to act within their own territories, social movements are dislocated from their usual position of petitioning states to redress grievances" (2000:1). The supposed weakness of the state means the social movement is restricted to airing its grievances at the international level. I contend, and the research informing this thesis supports the idea, that the nation-state remains an important element with regard to Transnational Social Movements (TSMs) and certainly ethnic identity and nationalism remain driving factors in political mobilization around the world. I present below an evaluation of this contention.

Within the Canadian context, Ronald Niezen explores the rise of Indigenous Social Movements (ISMs) and notes a distinction between how ISMs behave in comparison to other marginalized communities, who resist domination through acts such as non-compliance and theft, in other words non-organized actions (2000:121). Instead, ISMs operate through international forums and attempt to engage with international politics in order to gain support for their priorities (Niezen 2000: 121). Niezen points out an ironic fact when he notes, "for those indigenous spokespeople who initiated the process of international lobbying, this was an especially daring strategy. It represents a new use of international bodies of states to overcome the domestic abuses of states

themselves, while pushing development and recognition of international standards concerning the rights of indigenous peoples" (2000:122). This exemplifies the need for a transnational anthropological investigation of the interplay between ISMs and the nation-state, and I argue that the adoption of international political mechanisms reflects a diplomatic approach to negotiating the rights of Indigenous peoples with the nation-state through the ISM framework. ISMs utilize the international mechanism in order to improve life locally for Indigenous peoples. Niezen (2000) offers an example of an early Canadian ISM.

In 1923 Six Nations leader, Levi General Deskaheh, pushed for self-government through international lobbying. He declared that the Six Nations Iroquois have been a self-governing nation, the League of Iroquois, for centuries, and should be recognized by the Canadian government as such. A government representative, upon visiting the Six Nations reserves, reported that he observed the strength of the separatist party and their commitment to self-determination. Their wishes were denied at the Canadian government level; Deskaheh and his delegation took their grievance to Geneva and the League of Nations where they held public lectures and disseminated literature to delegates. Once again they were unsuccessful at being heard, but did receive sympathy from such nations as The Netherlands, Ireland, Panama, Japan, and Persia (Niezen 2000:124-125). This example represents an organized, non-violent, response to the constraints of a dominant nation through new transnational mechanisms that reached beyond the limitations of the national domain.

The Indigenous Saami, of Scandinavia, in contrast, made somewhat different use of transnational political processes within existing political structures. They were faced with state assimilation policies, to which they responded by organizing politically. This group succeeded in creating the Nordic Saami Council, which was instrumental in constructing the Draft Nordic Saami Convention that would allow the Saami to "participate in an international treaty on an almost equal footing with the Nordic states" (Koivurova 2008:280). Mattias Ahrén notes that the Saami, who inhabit present-day Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia, are divided by "borders drawn up by others" (2004:65). Thus, the initial transnational political action of the Saami was to organize themselves across national boundaries. The Inuit, like the Saami, have struggled for recognition of sovereign rights across national boundaries, and have united across borders to achieve their goals.

As an internationally recognized Indigenous People's Organization (IPO), the early creation of the ICC meets the criteria of a transnational social movement organization (TSMO), fitting Kriesberg's (1997) five components. The ICC has offices in four nations that support infrastructures for action through social networks, as shown by frequent meetings and the quadrennial conference. The ICC is a permanent participant at the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental organization attended by the eight circumpolar countries and a select group of circumpolar Indigenous organizations. It manages resources, such as funding from various sources that are used to promote ICC goals and the interests of the broader Inuit population. And finally, the ICC supports

other TSMs and Indigenous NGOs. It participates in the UNPFII and has maintained a long time partnership with the Saami Council through the Arctic Caucus at the permanent forum. Placing the ICC within the TSM framework can assist in building an understanding of the ICC-AK political identity. Since its early beginnings, ICC has transformed from a TSM to becoming recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

Early NGOs arose out of the 1949 United Nations mandate that requires outside parties to monitor nation-states, but they are no longer the only NGOs operating in existence today. Contemporary NGOs typically pick up where governments leave off. Be it supporting charities, education, healthcare, or monitoring human rights, NGOs operate at many levels, including the local, transnational, and global. From multi-million dollar organizations to those supporting grassroots alliances and village-based groups, NGOs come in various shapes and sizes (Leve and Karim 2001:54). Anthropological literature concerning NGOs (see Heaton and Adhikiari 2011 for further nuanced anthropological discussion of NGOs) attempt to present the debate concerning the reality of NGOs operating in the world today. On one side of the debate are those who laud NGOs as purveyors of democracy, as networks of activists, and as alleviators of poverty. On the other side are those that question the rise in NGOs along with the increase in grant aid available today. Furthermore, other critiques wonder about alliances between NGOs, the private sector and states in order to get donor funds. Leve and Karim explore this debate through an anthropological lens not just by evaluating the NGOs as service

providers, but by seeing them as "producers of social meaning and of self-making possibilities for various groups, both internal and external to the state" (2001:55). Moreover, local, national, and transnational environmental movements often utilize the NGO apparatus to promote their goals.

The use of these organizations is often viewed positively as a means to redistribute power, providing the necessary support to underrepresented causes. Like Leve and Karim (2001), Peter J. Brosius (1999) offers an anthropological critique. He argues that these NGOs may contribute to a misrepresentation of "nature" through use of Indigenous peoples in the discourse presented in campaigns (Brosius 1999:36). He calls for ethnographic research of "the progressive envelopment of environmental movements within institutions for local, national, and global environmental surveillance and governance" (Brosius 1999:37). Furthermore, discourse becomes naturalized through a process of "institutionalization" of the environment that promotes some voices but excludes others.

These institutions "designed to advance an environmental agenda, … in fact often obstruct meaningful change through endless negotiation, legalistic evasion, compromise among 'stakeholders', and the creation of unwieldy projects aimed at top-down environmental management" (Brosius 1999:38). Anthropology contributes to evaluating the NGO phenomenon by deconstructing the institutionalization of movements and the NGOs that work to promote their causes. The fact that there is a debate at all is an indication of the complexities surrounding NGOs. As an Indigenous Peoples NGO, ICC

has the responsibility of monitoring governmental actions. I do not argue that all Brosius' (1999) critiques of NGOs can be leveled at the ICC. They have documented cases highlighting important ICC contributions to government actions, such as their influence at the various Arctic Council working groups. Their influence at the Arctic Council on key issues such as environmental pollution and regulations concerning endangered marine mammals has resulted in recognition of impacts on Inuit through implementation of the suggested mandates arising from the Arctic Council. Alternatively, there are elements of "institutionalization" of the Inuit discourse shown through the consistent use of terms such as "Inuit cultural unity" used by the ICC in much of its literature and as part of its public representation. This implies that all Inuit respond to issues with a unified stance, potentially missing any Inuit detractors who do not support the ICC position. With regard to political identity formation and the influence ICC may have as an NGO, there is some evidence that the ICC produces social meaning through such mechanisms as their quadrennial conference which combines cultural celebration with the formal council business. It is interesting to contemplate who is included and who is excluded through this creation of social meaning and institutionalization of Inuit discourse.

## 1.3 What is Political Identity?

The Arctic Human Development Report defines identity as "the ways in which individuals and groups perceive and act upon the social and cultural traditions they inhabit" (Csonka and Schweitzer 2004:45). By extension then, *political* identity could be

defined as the way individuals and groups understand and act upon the *political* aspects of social and cultural traditions they inhabit.

What is the role today of the nation with regard to political identity? Arjun Appadurai describes the rise of what he calls *ethnoscapes* within a deterritorialized world (1996:48-49). These realms of social action are not only the "obvious examples such as transnational corporations and money markets but also ...ethnic groups, sectarian movements, and political formations, which increasingly operate in ways that transcend specific territorial boundaries and identities" (Appadurai 1996:49). It appears that Appadurai is arguing that with the increase in global contact, identity becomes disconnected from the nation and becomes tied to ethnic and political elements that "flow" across national boundaries. In contradistinction, John L. Comaroff argues that despite decolonization and post modernity, nationalist consciousness remains alive and well and tied to ethnic identity (1996:163). He does not dispute the weakening of the nation-state as a result of globalization, but in his view ethnic identity is linked to nationalism and not disconnected from it (Comaroff 1996:175).

Mark Edelman, when investigating social movements and identity, asks how these social movements are able to speak for an entire group or community. Do social movements hold a position of privileged authority over all? He calls for an understanding of the "multiple politics" involved with how these movements operate (2001:300-301). One phenomenon that is revealed by this research is the disconnect between local Indigenous groups and the international organizations that represent them.

The Executive Director twice noted the lack of understanding of what ICC can potentially accomplish at the village level. She astutely observed that people in the village are less concerned with the long term and slowly accomplished goals that the ICC strives for at the international level, but are more concerned with the day-to-day matters that would help them in their immediate lives. Her vision for the future of ICC-AK includes more communication between ICC-AK and the villages, which interestingly does not include urban Inuit, who may become more of a focus for ICC-AK in the future. This research does not investigate this issue, but recommends further inquiry into the inclusion of urban Indigenous perspectives in political identity research. The focus of the ICC-AK Executive Director, as explained to me in interviews and informal conversations, is rural Alaska and the village perspective. She envisions village people knowing about ICC, its activities, and the ways it is having an impact. I believe ICC-AK's Food Security initiative, a recent project aimed at raising awareness and gaining support from various stake holders, provides a mechanism to bring ICC-AK to the village. The goal is to create a framework that allows local hunters to engage with ICC-AK and various entities in order to fulfill project goals. By involving local hunters in their scientific investigation of Alaska Inuit food security, the initiative raises the potential for those in the community to realize the benefits of supporting the work of ICC-AK.

## 1.4 What is the Inuit Circumpolar Council?

> [At] the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in Alaska in 1977 Eben Hopson, Sr. invited Inuit from across the Arctic to share regional experiences, celebrate the unity of Inuit, and to commit to collective International action. [Inuit Circumpolar Council 2010c]

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (renamed the Inuit Circumpolar Council) was based on the vision of Eben Hopson, the then mayor of the North Slope Borough (NSB), a public government representing the North Slope circumpolar region in Alaska. Hopson was responding to resource exploration on the North Slope, which led him to reach out to Inuit leaders in Canada and Greenland to unite politically to ensure the Inuit voice was being heard in light of the oncoming encroachment of resource development in the Inuit homelands. During interviews I conducted, two early members of the ICC recall the inception of the ICC in the following way:

> The mayor of the NSB was a gentleman by the name of Eben Hopson...he was the first mayor...He knew some of the Greenlander leaders, some of the Canadian leaders, just through association through his position. And he had a great concern about losing control over all kinds of things, over the oil and gas exploration...on the North Slope. He had the vision that he could see that this was something that was just starting,

> that it was something throughout the whole north... So he called for this meeting, which was called in 1977...and got the people there. So that was the beginning, an environmental concern and a political concern. [Executive Council Member interview, June 6, 2011]

This individual goes on to describe how the environmental concern has caused some confusion for those outside the organization.

> Right from the beginning ICC was much more than just an environmental organization. I mean it clearly had political aspirations and self-determination as one of its agenda items. So even today, a lot of people who don't know the organization think it is an environmental organization and has an environmental concern, if anything it's a political organization, and covers a wide range of issues, but it's always looking to advance rights and self-determination for Inuit. So that's how it started. From 1977 to 1980 there was a small group from the three countries charged with putting together a charter. [Executive Council Member interview, June 6, 2011]

This sentiment is echoed by the words of a previous ICC employee involved with the early creation and activities of the ICC:

> the oil development and the other encroachments that they [Eben Hopson and others] witnessed prompted a ground swell to protect a wide range of things. For me, seeing the desires of Hopson, who had incredible foresight to see that it was going to happen, and we had better make sure we get a slice of the pie. Especially in terms of oil development, that was a foregone conclusion, and the best way to get a slice of the pie was to organize the North Slope Borough to capture the revenue. Even though I am critical of it as a public government, not just Iñupiat, it was still brilliant...Hopson's looking past the North Slope Borough, to see that we need to operate at the international level. The political milieu at the time; many different activities and events fed to this galvanizing of forces and oneness in terms of the projection as far as our future is concerned, that really came together. [Early ICC Organization Employee interview, August 15, 2011]

The above quotations provide a sense of the political environment prompting the inception of the international ICC organization. I return to these points during discussion concerning Inuit political identity, but wish to include these comments here to highlight the events leading to the creation of the ICC. Next I describe in detail the contemporary structure of the organization.

Much of the ICC related documents and informational/marketing materials stress that ICC is an internationally recognized organization with UN Consultation Status II and a permanent participant seat at the Arctic Council, where they represent all Inuit. This is supported by conversations with ICC representatives, who have noted that ICC is important to Inuit because it provides a voice at the international level where issues have a greater chance of being heard and possible solutions found. This lends political credence to their position within the transnational realm. It is beneficial to explore the physical structure ICC has adopted, in order to grasp some of the network flows that occur within the organization while trying to achieve support for Inuit issues.

The ICC is comprised of national offices in each of Alaska of the United States, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka of the Russian Far East. Each office contains individuals that represent the local office at the international meeting, referred to as the "General Assembly", held quadrennially. The General Assembly is both an opportunity for the national offices to come together and produce a declaration on future directions, as well as a cultural celebration. Figure 1.2 below illustrates the General Assembly structure for the years 2010 to 2014 (including the fieldwork period for this thesis). The individuals holding the chair are elected and hold the seat for the four-year period.

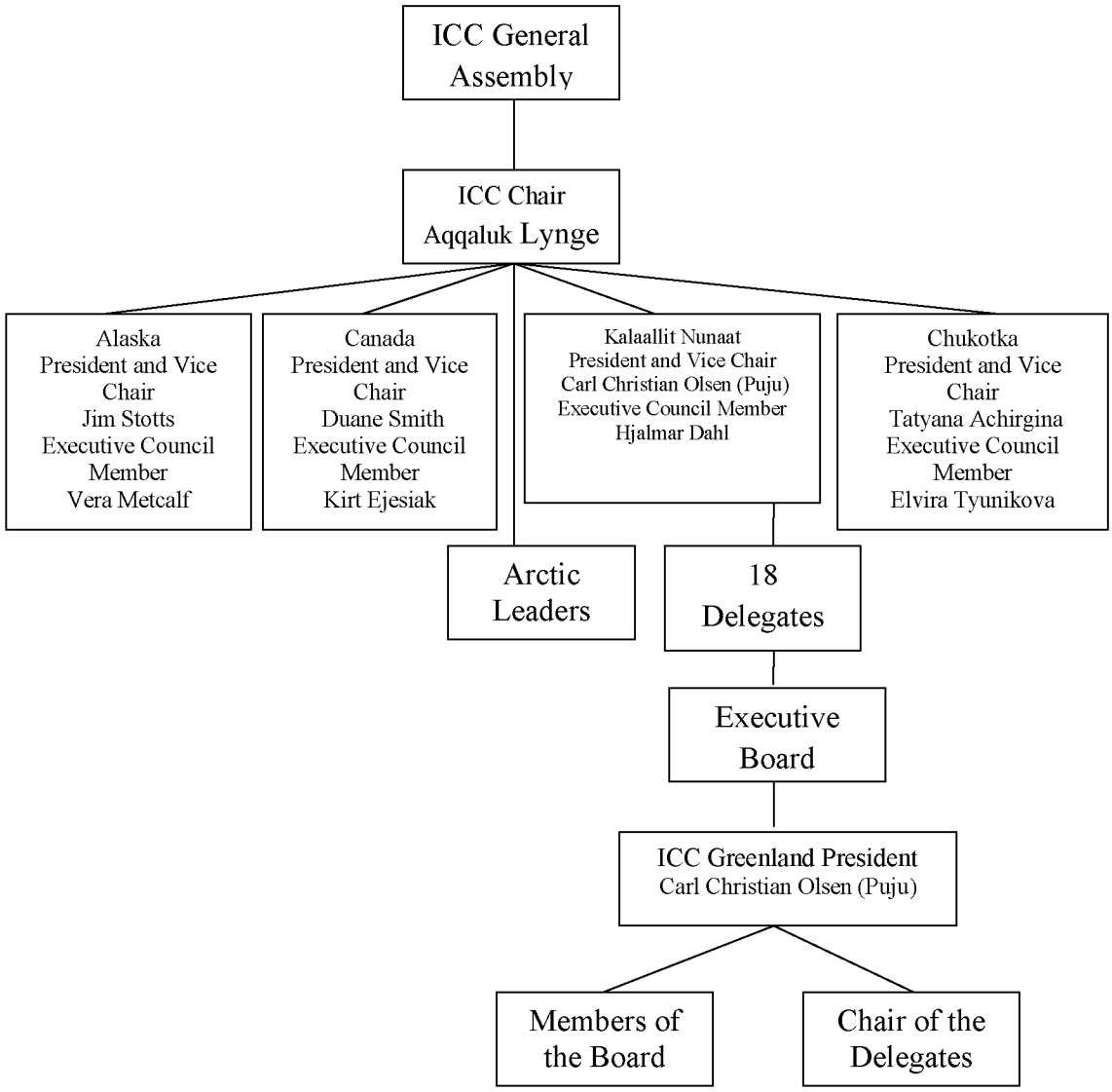


Figure 1.2 ICC General Assembly Structure (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2012b)

The above schematic shows the connections between nations and the hierarchical flow of the international ICC organization.

There existed within each nation membership partners. How and who make up these memberships varies among the national offices, but these members also sit on the national boards and contribute to the directions ICC offices take. In Alaska the membership is comprised of regional institutions and organizations, described below in an interview I conducted with a current ICC-AK Executive Director:

> The way that our bylaw is structured, the way that ICC membership works is that our regional organizations are members to ICC. So, in the north for example it's the North Slope Borough, which is a public home-ruled government organized under the state. And then we have the ASRC, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, which is the corporate organization in the North Slope. And then we have the Inupiaq community of the Arctic Slope, which is the non-profit, social services type of organization. So, in each of our regions, this is who our membership is. [Current ICC-AK Employee interview, April 21, 2011]

The same individual continues to explain how some of the Alaska memberships are Native corporations created from the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act (1971) (ANCSA), and that within the Alaska context, much of the work of the ICC-AK is related

to "unfinished" matters resulting from ANCSA, such as hunting and food security. I return to the issue of ANCSA in Chapter Three when discussing the ICC-AK relationship with the nation-state. At this point, it is important to understand that the ICC-AK organizational structure has ties to this agreement, while the institutional structure of the other national offices would not be directly related to ANCSA.

The local Alaska branch of ICC employs a hierarchical structure much the same as other non-profit corporations, with a president at the top, followed by an executive director who works closely with the president, an administrative director, project assistant, and a position that was created during my time with the office called the traditional knowledge/science advisor.

The ICC wears many hats as an organization representing Inuit interests in the circumpolar region. It is most recognizable as an Indigenous Peoples NGO, but as Jessica Shadian notes it is also governments that exhibit state-like characteristics, but ones that do not seek "statehood" and are not "bound within the traditional territorial limitations of a state operating in the international system" (2010:2). Sovereignty and political autonomy, in the case of the Inuit in the circumpolar region, are tied to the nation-states. Shadian (2010) calls for a re-conceptualization of "sovereignty" based on Indigenous peoples complex positions within a state. They are not looking for absolute autonomy, but nevertheless have a special relationship with the state. This re-evaluation of sovereignty through the ICC framework involves the incorporation of an

understanding of Indigenous cultural autonomy, and a look at how it is relevant to political autonomy:

> Local Inuit governance throughout Alaska, Canada and Greenland is reified and bolstered through international human rights norms and legislation (i.e. Inuit *rights* to Arctic mineral resources; breast milk free of POPs – international *right* to health and the exportation of caribou pate – the preservation and/or commodification – of *indigenous* culture). The legitimacy of the ICC as a transnational polity is simultaneously rooted in the space of the Arctic and the international system. [Shadian 2010:11-12]

Associated with the political identity ICC presents to the rest of the world is the complex reasoning behind the incorporation of the organization's name.

The issue of nomenclature surrounding the term "Inuit" requires some reflection as it forms a substantial part of this thesis discussion, and has a complex usage in the circumpolar region. There are two applications of the term "Inuit", one is more broad and political, encompassing both Inuit and Yup'ik language speaking peoples, the second is a narrower linguistic based application that only refers to Inuit language speaking peoples. The ICC-AK subscribes to the broader, political understanding of the term Inuit, as it outlines on its website that "Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska...represents and advocates for the Iñupiat of the Arctic Slope, Northwest, and Bering Straits; St. Lawrence Island

(Siberian) Yupik; and Central Yup'ik and Cup'ik of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in Southwest Alaska" (Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska 2012). Their assertion that they represent all Inuit groups in Alaska shows their adoption of the broader, political notion associated with the term "Inuit", which can be a reflection of their activities at the international level.

It is worth contemplating the adoption of the political use of the term "Inuit", as it points to elements of ICC political identity. As noted in the section describing the ancestral foundations for Inuit in the circumpolar region, the term "Eskimo" is used to designate the linguistic groups also referred to as "Inuit". The term "Eskimo" has negative connotations associated with it due to mistranslations and association with the colonial period. It has often been thought that the term was an Algonquian one that translated as "eaters of raw flesh", but it is speculated that the term derives from Montagnais and means "snowshoe netter" or "to net snowshoes" (Fienup-Riordan 1990:5; Schweitzer and Lee 1997:29). Within Alaska the use of "Eskimo" has less derogatory associations and continues to be used by some Alaskan Eskimo. Whereas in Canada *Inuit* has been preferred for some time and Greenland groups self identify as *Kalaallit* (Schweitzer and Lee 1997:29).

It was in response to the pejorative misunderstanding of the term "Eskimo" that the ICC released a resolution on the issue in 2010. It draws on the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples which promotes the full realization of social and cultural identity, customs and traditions by Indigenous peoples, and the International

Labour Organization Convention 169, which supports Indigenous peoples right to self identify.

> Whereas ICC and other Inuit organizations have consistently self-identified as "Inuit" in the context of international matters; and
>
> Whereas the term "Eskimo" is not an Inuit term, and is not one that Inuit themselves adopted; and
>
> Whereas the scientific, research, and other communities have used inconsistent terms when referring to Inuit; and
>
> Whereas some members of the scientific community have reached out to ICC seeking guidance on how the term "Inuit" should be used in their research and published literature;
>
> Let it therefore be resolved that the research, science, and other communities be called upon to use the term "Inuit", instead of "Eskimo" and "paleo-Inuit" instead of "paleo-Eskimo" in the publications of research findings and other documents". [Inuit Circumpolar Council Resolution 2010b]

This resolution makes interesting points concerning the use of artificial terms by those outside a culture group most notably that Eskimo is not an Inuit term and therefore not recognized by the ICC as the appropriate term of reference. Furthermore, they note specifically that ICC and other Inuit organizations self-identify as "Inuit" at the

international level. This indicates a relationship between the terms of reference a culture group identifies with and the global arena they conduct activities within.

The broader application of the term "Inuit" to the many diverse language groups may veil the distinctiveness of each group. For example, the folding of the Alaska Yup'ik and Cup'ik within the ICC-AK political organization as one people under the term "Inuit" conceals the possible distinctiveness of each group. But, it may be that the need for the ICC-AK to operate at the international level makes it more beneficial to identify under a larger culture group. Does this create a tension between the local and the global interests of the organization, requiring that local diversity be sacrificed in order to achieve goals of self-determination at the international level?

This chapter gave a brief description of the pre-history and history of the Inuit in the circumpolar region. I outlined the migration that led to the existence of Inuit today, highlighting the various linguistic branches and the archaeological evidence for cultural continuity through to the present day and across the circumpolar. This provides a foundation for later discussion related to cultural connections transforming into transnational ties. Moreover, I presented the argument that the study of transnational processes, usually applied to diasporic and migration studies in anthropology, has relevance when exploring Indigenous social movements. Next, I identified the ICC structure and provided a framework, as part of a transnational social movement, to view the organization through. This is followed by investigation of the term "Inuit", which shows the application ICC adopts with regard to their self-identification and the political

implications that comes from adopting one term that represents multiple groups. Leading to a question of how TSMs, and the subsequent NGOs that arise from them, speak for all those it claims to represent. I attempted to define political identity and note some of the discussion regarding differing schools of thoughts concerning the role of the nation-state in political identity constructions. Each of the items dealt with in the above questions form part of the ongoing discussion throughout the remaining thesis.

Chapter One attempted to answer three questions: What are transnational processes? What is the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)? What is Political Identity? Focusing on these questions allowed me to highlight some of the existing literature and provide a foundation for an understanding of the relationship between these three elements. In addition I discussed anthropological theory relating to the validity of utilizing the "nation-state" as a concept in anthropology.

Chapter Two outlines my research project, focusing on methodology and the role of ethnographic research, my approach to data analysis, and any limitations I experienced utilizing these methods. Chapter Three enters into a discussion and interpretation of the data, describing resulting themes and their relationship to the three questions described in Chapter One. Chapter Four seeks to contextualize the research findings within an anthropological framework by applying various theoretical approaches to the themes described in Chapter Three. Finally, Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the preceding chapters, and formulates conclusions.

# Chapter 2 Methodology, Circumpolar Ethnography, and the Research Environment

## 2.1 Methodology

This research is a case study. It does not attempt to be representative of all possible manifestations of transnational phenomena and the construction of political identity. I explore these processes through one particular organization, the ICC-AK. For example, how the Saami Council constructs and expresses its political identity may be dissimilar to how the ICC does. This does not limit the value of these methods, which can still offer insight into the processes through specific cases. I employ methods including participant observation, content analysis and interviews producing the data used to draw conclusion concerning the thesis questions.

The interviews I conducted were open-ended, with semi-directed questions. These allowed the individual to explore a topic from his/her own perspective, but enabled the researcher to control the direction of the interview. Appendix 1 is the sample interview script utilized. Triangulation of findings occurred through review of various ICC documents and other grey literature, such as government and archival materials.

### 2.1.1 Ethnographic Research on the Inuit

Ethnographic research concentrating on the circumpolar region has undergone shifting approaches over the years. The following survey tracks some of the changes throughout its progression, with a focus on the sub-discipline of circumpolar ethnography. I will highlight some of the contributions made from early ethnographic work by Franz Boas and Knud Rasmussen, while critiquing the approach they adopt to

investigating Inuit culture, finally touching upon the contemporary approaches to circumpolar ethnography.

The sub-discipline of Inuit studies should recognize the contributions of the early works of Franz Boas and Knud Rasmussen, two of the founding fathers of circumpolar ethnography. I begin by looking at some of the early works such as Boas' "The Central Eskimo" and Knud Rasmussen's "The People of the Polar North: A Record" (Rasmussen 1999 [1927]), to determine key elements of ethnographic production from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Boas's approach to circumpolar ethnography provided a way to convey Inuit culture to the public in the late nineteenth century, a period that conceptualized circumpolar culture in romantic contexts, often through the descriptions brought back to by Arctic explorers, (McGhee 2005). But, while Boas may have succeeded in "defamiliarizing" (Stern and Stevenson 2006:20) Eurocentric mind sets, establishing a firm foundation for North American anthropology by developing "the concepts of culture and cultural relativism" (Kulchyski 2006:155), others note that his work does not account for the less "traditional" aspects of Inuit culture that could have been observed during his fieldwork in the Canadian Arctic (Searles 2006:93).

The book, "The Central Eskimo" (Boas 1973[1888]) details Boas's journey and year long stay in Cumberland Sound in the Canadian Arctic. This depiction is an extensive detailing of the Inuit culture he encountered during his journey. His words describe a rich culture just as complex as European ones and is mostly interested in describing Inuit culture, in particular, the cultural traits belonging to particular areas, as is

illustrated by the table of contents which is broken down by "Distribution of tribes", "Influence of geographical conditions upon the distribution of the settlements", "Hunting and Fishing: Making leather and preparing skins", "Transportation by boats and sledges", "Habitation and dress", "Social and religious life", "Tales and traditions", and finally "Science and the arts" (1973 [1888]:401-403). Boas firstly is writing against a Eurocentric belief predominant at the time that non-European cultures were devoid of any form of "civilized" culture. This is in response to theories postulated by early anthropologist, Edward Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan, who theorized that culture developed through evolutionary progressions, meaning that non-European cultures existed in a "primitive" state that had not progressed to the standards of European culture (Kulchyski 2006:155). Boas's work defied this "grand narrative" (Searles 2006:93) through the process of scientific recognition of cultural relativism and historical determinism (Kulchyski 2006:155; Searles 2006:93). As his table of content indicates, Boas utilizes non-Inuit headings to discuss Inuit cultural traits. Terms like "religion" and "science" denote the European references recognizable in terms of European culture, which promotes a sense of understanding between diverse peoples, while utilizing Inuit terminology to highlight the relativity of culture, thus supporting the idea that cultural development is contextual.

Boas' work permeates with the desire to document the Inuit culture before what he believed was its inevitable demise. His descriptions of all observable aspects of Inuit life is impressive and often assists in a contemporary setting by facilitating re-learning

elements of Inuit culture that are no longer known. Alternatively, the salvage ethnography Boas practiced does not document the Inuit interactions with non-Inuit, and therefore limits how much we can learn about cultural processes during the contact period. Edmund Searles describes this as the documentation of "traditions, myths, and customs that predate contact with Europeans" (2006:93) and Nancy Wachowich echoes Searles in her description of Boas' focus on the Iglulingmiut of Baffin Island:

> to Boas the Iglulingmiut promised to exhibit a more thorough adaptation to their natural environment than those groups who had been living among whalers or who had more contact with explorers. He believed that geophysical and ethnographic data from this 'isolated' and 'pure' group would demonstrate early states of Inuit cultural development. [2006:124]

The idea that there was a pressing need to document pristine Inuit culture assumes that culture can be authentically "pure" and rooted in an "original" state.

Like Boas, Knud Rasmussen, a Danish-Greenlandic explorer by heritage and ethnographer believed he was documenting a "pristine" Inuit culture. The Fifth Thule Expedition, from 1921 to 1924, was undertaken in an attempt to connect the origins of Inuit culture to inland North America, with the goal of revealing the human pre-historic world in North America (Rasmussen 1999 [1927]:xxxviii). The expedition failed to prove the North American origins of the Inuit, but Rasmussen's work continues to be a valuable contribution to Inuit studies, as the first large scale ethnographic comparison of

circumpolar cultures (Rasmussen 1999 [1927]:xxi). Within these early works is the assumption that drastic changes in Inuit culture were resulting in its demise, requiring a devotion to capture the culture before it is gone. What is missing is a deeper, more nuanced understanding of culture that would have revealed intricacies that are considered important to contemporary ethnographers.

Circumpolar ethnographic works produced within the last twenty-five years, by such author as Ann Fienup-Riordan (1990), Jean L. Briggs (1998), Norman Chance (1990), and an edited volume by Pamela Stern and Lisa Stevenson (2006), seek to show that cultures are not static, and are in fact fluid and adaptive. The ethnographies listed here are written from a critical post-colonial perspective, going beyond merely documenting material culture to engaging in reflexive discussion of "representation" (Fienup-Riordan 1990) that evaluates Inuit historical interconnectedness with world systems (Chance 1990), and embrace a philosophical exploration of the reconciliation of the individual with the larger culture (Briggs 1998). These ethnographers take a critical look at Inuit studies through defamiliarization within the field (Stern and Stevenson 2006), requiring the ethnographer to obtain a “critical distance”.

The act of obtaining a critical distance requires the ethnographer to remove him/herself from the subject of study (Stern and Stevenson 2006:20). While classical circumpolar ethnography sought to critique the Eurocentric belief in superior races and universal moral standards, contemporary circumpolar ethnography has taken part in the reification of different categories, such as the "naturalness" and "ahistoricalness" of Inuit

culture (Stern and Stevenson 2006:20). Stern and Stevenson recommend a situated understanding of knowledge production. Furthermore, they suggest recognition of culture that is created in a particular historical moment (2006:20), and promote a critical look at Inuit studies that requires an evaluation of how we come to know what we know.

The reflexive approach shows a specific power dynamic between the researcher and the researched. By evaluating the researcher's position vis-à-vis those being studied, how the ethnographic approach affects those under study, and the consequences our ethnographic work has on our subjects is revealed (Stern and Stevenson 2006:21). How is it that we came to be in, for instance, an Inuit family's home and how do we, the researcher gain from the experience? Alternatively, does the Inuit family stand to lose something from taking part in our research? In my opinion, these important questions require constant reflection throughout the research process. A continued awareness of the imbalance of power throughout the project will assist in reducing the potential harm to those researched. One way to ameliorate some of the power imbalance between researcher and researched is the incorporation of collaboration into the research. Michael J. Kraul and Lori Idlout (2006) speak of their experience designing and implementing a participatory research project in Nunavut, Canada.

Collaborative or participatory research is based on a relationship between researchers and the researched that includes elements of trust, rapport, and respect. By incorporating these aspects in the research design and methodology, researchers can alleviate some of the power dynamic inherent in classical research. Kraul and Idlout

note, "A significant and sustaining strength of such research is the shared belief that the benefits of working collectively will outweigh the drawbacks" (2006:55). Unlike many ethnographers today, Boas's and Rasmussen's ethnographic accounts do not contend so much with the tensions between the researcher and the researched. The interest at the time was in documenting "pristine" cultural practices and less about reflecting on the collection processes.

Today, ethnographers call for a more nuanced understanding of culture and its attendant processes. Peter Kulchyski, while recognizing the value of documenting Inuit material culture in the Boasian format, would have us turn our attention "away from things, [by doing so] we can pay closer attention to culture not as a residual element of some former purity but as an engaged and contemporary set of practices" (2006:158). Furthermore, he calls for culture to be understood as the "expression and embodiment of values" (2006:158). By which he refers to the relationship between cultural values and practices. Values, such as egalitarianism and trust circulate through cultural practices and are today threatened by the dominant society (Kulchyski 2006:158). Contemporary circumpolar ethnography is not without its hang-ups and a critique can be levied concerning some work today.

Fienup-Riordan makes a point of noting that Arctic scholars are prone to getting lost in the "minutiae of their own field" (1990:xiii) leaving generalist to inform popular representation about Yup'ik culture, resulting in a skewed understanding. She calls for a bridge between scholarship and popular concepts of Yup'ik, and recommends Arctic

scholars actively engage in breaking down non-Inuit stereotypes in order to promote an accurate interpretation of Inuit action, past and present (Fienup-Riordan 1990:xx). This, to my mind, embraces some of the elements Boas espoused in his ethnographic work, that being the need to understand culture from a relative and historical perspective, indicating the continued importance of early Inuit studies. Furthermore, I would argue that much of the work done since the 1990s is actively engaged in breaking down the stereotypes Fienup-Riordan discusses, and this is witnessed through Stern and Stevenson's (1990:2006) edited text featuring chapters that look critically at ethnographic production and Inuit studies.

From Boas and Rasmussen Inuit studies draws a great deal of ethnographic detail, valued today as tools to re-invigorate Inuit culture. Despite the salvage approach to ethnographic research, their attempt at the time to defamiliarize Eurocentric thinking is laudable and anthropology owes its current appreciation of cultural relativism to these early foundations. Contemporary Inuit researchers recognize their contribution, but ask that we make an effort to reflect on our position vis-à-vis the researched, in order to understand the power dynamics involved in our actions. Furthermore, experimentation with a variety of ethnographic research methods and production can assist anthropology in moving towards a more reflexive discipline. Finally, I believe that collaborative, or participatory, research can ensure that the field stays viable in a post-colonial world, and applaud the increase in Indigenous researchers aiding us in understanding the world from a different perspective.

The above discussion illuminates the perspective I applied to the research design process and subsequent research activities. Building on this historical relationship between Inuit and ethnographic literature, I intended to recognize the colonial nature of the non-native anthropological position and the community I studied with the goal of developing a collaborative project. With this intention in mind I made attempts to involve representatives with ICC-AK in the research process as much as possible. I conferred with ICC-AK regarding the research question and determined that it was one that would be of interest to them, and scheduled a research update meeting in August with the president and executive director in order to inform them of how the project was progressing. I felt fully supported by the representatives of ICC-AK throughout the entire process and was encouraged by frequent inquiries by the president and the executive director into the project progress.

## 2.2 Fieldwork

Certain characteristics make the ICC a suitable candidate for a transnational exploration of Indigenous political identity. The organization's focus on Inuit culture as a unifying element combined with its cross-national early beginnings, as well as contemporary seats at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Arctic Council, all contribute to the ICC's usefulness as a research site. Opening avenues for collaboration to this particular field site proved to be somewhat challenging, but not impossible. I was able to utilize a contact through my advisor to reach a member of the ICC-AK executive council, who then placed me in touch with the

executive director. During this process, I also made the required application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB determined this research project was exempt from the requirements of 45 CFR 46 and further review (letter attached as Appendix 2). As part of the ethics requirement, I produced an informed consent form, outlining to the research participant what was being asked of them and how the information they shared would be used (attached as Appendix 3). There were a number of levels of introduction that I needed to go through, finally gaining permission to work in the ICC-AK Anchorage office as an unpaid intern over the summer of 2011 (confirmation email attached as Appendix 4). But, fieldwork began in a more distant location, New York City.

I attended the UNPFII in New York City in May 2011. The forum provided an opportunity to observe some of the events and meetings where I was able to see first-hand the relationship between the international ICC organization, the local national ICC office representatives, and other Indigenous groups. While at the UNPFII I sat in on side events and the general meeting concerned with giving voice to Indigenous People's issues, providing a foundation for the impending summer with ICC-AK in Anchorage. As an intern with the ICC-AK for three months, I was able to participate in a few projects through which I became acquainted with ICC documents and was able to attend meetings, where I learned the inner workings of the organization and how the transnational network between the various offices operate to promote the ICC goals. I was placed in charge of documenting and organizing the office files, enabling me to get a sense of the multiple layers of meaning that make up ICC-AK. These documents

included various correspondence, media releases and reports concerning a variety of ICC projects and interests. Additionally, I conducted semi-directed interviews with five key individuals associated with the executive council, previous and current members and employees. These documents and interviews are supplemented by observations made at the UNPFII, participation in every day events at the ICC-AK office, and the ICC Executive Council meeting held in Nome, Alaska in September 2011.

## 2.3 Analysis

Analysis within anthropology is very much an iterative process, requiring revisiting the gathered data and reformulating concepts throughout the research process. This project involved content analysis of ICC related documents, semi-directed interviews, and the interpretation of field notes resulting from participating and observing at various locations. By comparing the data from each of these activities, I am able to determine some key themes relating to Inuit political identity and transnational processes.

Moreover, as noted previously, I was able to take part in a number of scenarios that allowed for data abstraction, which in turn prompted ongoing interpretation. The research process began with an extensive literature review, focusing on transnational processes, Inuit culture, and political identity. The literature provided a foundation for analysis and comparison, and revealed interesting questions concerning how Indigenous social movements form across nations, but still appear to have underlying nation-state influences and outcomes. I consider this the first level of analysis, which is followed by analysis based on involvement in ICC related activities. I was able to continuously

evaluate the research question on an ongoing base through field notes and recorded interviews. A research report produced and presented in mid-August to the ICC-AK president and executive director enabled me to engage in further analysis. I was able to confer with them on the themes I identified to that point, providing an important moment in the collaborative part of the research. The feedback they gave me assisted in the refining of research questions and assured me that they were still agreeable to my conducting field research in their office.

## 2.4 Limitations

The most prominent issue was time. It became apparent early in the research fieldwork that the time allotted for the work was quite short. The three and a half months spent gathering data seemed to lead to more questions than could be answered during that short time. I was concerned that the time constraints would not allow me to explore the research question to its full extent. I was also worried that my previous years spent working in an office environment would promote a comfort level not conducive to critical observation and necessary data abstraction. In the end, I was able to settle in to the research environment fairly quickly, due to the interest and support from the members of the ICC-AK office. And through constant consideration and awareness of my past experiences in office environments, I was able to reflect on the research process and my responses to the fieldwork experience, producing new insights that I may have missed had I not been familiar with the environment.

Furthermore, the nature of participant observation is such that it can be difficult to control the research environment, resulting in challenges in describing and interpreting the data generated, the researcher is "reacting to and interacting with others in the events and situations that unfold before him or her" (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002:17). Conversely, these challenges are offset by the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of cultural processes and phenomenon through direct experience, while interviews assist in allowing the researcher to address specific questions in order to complement observed phenomenon.

In this chapter I presented the perspective and methods that form this research. I have used qualitative methods combined with participant observation and interviews, in order to gain a holistic understanding of transnational phenomena as they are experienced in particular circumstances. I addressed also the historical and current approaches to ethnographic production in anthropology, with a focus on early ethnographic research in comparison to today's practices that incorporate a more reflexive interest in not just documenting a culture, but finding value in learning the meanings produced in the political and social circumstances of a particular cultural setting. Reflexive awareness of the colonial history in the region and the particular power dynamics they can create between the researcher and the people being studied was a guiding principle (Keskitalo 1994; Smith 1999). My selection of ICC-AK as a field site was influenced by their organizational structure and transnational network among national branch offices. This is crucial to the investigation of Indigenous transnational processes and provides a

foundation for much of the discussion in Chapter Four. The following chapter delves into the themes that materialized from the analysis of interviews and observations during my time with ICC-AK.

# Chapter 3 Unity Within Diversity, Consensus and Diplomacy

## 3.1 The Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska Setting

Traditionally anthropological fieldwork of Indigenous peoples occurred in "remote" and "isolated" regions around the world. With its focus on understanding the human condition through a study of those outside Euro-Western society, anthropology was often practiced far from industrial urban locales. Today, there is more interest in learning about culture in urban centers. For example, there have been studies concerned with everything from the New York Stock Exchange (Abolafia 2002), to multiethnic housing projects and urban danger in a major United States northeastern city (Engle Merry 2002), and the rural to urban migration in Nairobi, Kenya (Nelson 2002). These examples highlight the diverse concentrations urban anthropology can take, but if one attempts to search out anthropological research concerning Alaska Native peoples in urban centers, they quickly find paucity in the area. With notable exceptions produced by Molly Lee (2002), who looks at the subsistence debate in Alaska and urban Alaska Native women in Anchorage, Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley (2005) who explore Indigenous ways of knowing and the Alaska education system, Nobuhiro Kishigami and Molly Lee (2008) who produced an edited volume for Études/Inuit/Studies exploring urban Inuit issues, Nancy Fogel-Chance's (1993) study of gender relations among Iñupiaq women in Anchorage, and David V. Fazzino and Philip A. Loring (2009) who explore the issue of food security in Alaska through an analysis of rural to urban migration. Other than those just listed, there seems to be little interest in

learning about the human condition of urban Alaska Native peoples. The research field site for this thesis occurred in urban settings, of various sizes, from New York City to Nome, Alaska, with a majority of time spent in Anchorage, Alaska, and I believe this is a unique contribution to urban Alaska Native ethnography.

This fieldwork experience is unlike Fienup-Riordan's, who recounts her initial experience with fieldwork among the Nelson Island Yup'ik in 1975, and notes:

> While I stayed in the village, I slept in the pottery workshop on an old army cot brought down from the National Guard armory. Every morning at about 7:30, with no knock or courteous inquiry as to whether I was presentable, several older village men would come into the building, turn up the stove, turn on the coffee pot, and take their places on the benches along the wall. [1990:38]

Similarly, Chance's first fieldwork experience in Kaktovik, a northern village in Alaska, in 1958, conducted among the Iñupiat, details how he took up residence in a tent placed in the village (1990:67). Both authors convey a sense of their being "strangers in a strange land", as outsiders who negotiate their place in their selected research sites, attempting to understand the comings and goings of the unfamiliar individuals around them. Unlike Fienup-Riordan (1990) and Chance (1990), my initial encounter with the research site was less "stranger in a strange land", than stranger in a familiar land.

Arriving at my field research site involved walking down C Street in Anchorage, entering what would be considered by most urbanites as a non-descript, white four story office building, taking an elevator up to a set of offices occupied by the North Slope Borough and the ICC-AK, and being greeted by a receptionist. A setting I am very familiar with as someone who has worked for years in office buildings in various cities. As is often the case with those conducting anthropological research in a city, I did not reside with, or in close proximity, to the people that would inform the research, and only once experienced the home of one of the employees. But, this is the nature of urban anthropology. Foster and Kemper capture the differences between rural and urban ethnographic field research sites when they note "Conditioned by colleagues to expect a close emotional identification with the people studied, even the most conscientious researchers may come to question whether they are doing a good job and whether they are in fact true anthropologists, if fieldwork must be carried out in circumstances where the anthropologist is isolated much of the time from the target population" (2002:139). So, when entering the ICC-AK office, being greeted by the receptionist and shaking hands with the president of ICC-AK, I was acutely aware of how familiar the setting was to me. But, I reminded myself that the "unfamiliar" were the people I was encountering for the first time and the reason for my presence there. In keeping with the contemporary reflexive approach to ethnography detailed in Chapter Two, I was also aware of the power dynamic I was engaging in. Meeting the President of ICC-AK for the first time caused me to feel respectful to the point of being deferential. He held a powerful

position, recognized not only by his own society but also by those from other societies. This person gives speeches at International forums and is called on as an expert holding special knowledge of a group of people in a particular geographic region. I was the novice anthropologist entering his environment and did so with a great amount of reverence. Despite being put at ease early on with his friendly demeanor, I continued to feel a divide between my position and his throughout the fieldwork period. It was not until the end of my summer in Anchorage, at which point I attended an office supper, that I sensed an easing of the divide, but never losing a deep sense of respect for him.

The majority of the fieldwork for this project occurred in the ICC-AK office environment, and therefore my experience in these offices informs substantially the thematic inferences I describe in this chapter, which are heavily supplemented by the UNPFII and Executive Council meetings. When I first entered the ICC-AK offices located centrally in Anchorage, Alaska, I observed that they occupied office space connected with the North Slope Borough (NSB), specifically the "Government and External Affairs" division of the borough.

I was incorporated into the office environment as an unpaid intern for the ICC-AK, but due to the shortage of office space, I would move between occupied offices, taking up residence at an extra table in each one. I found this office sharing ideal for being directly involved in conversations and participation in activities. Any given day there may be all employees present to none, depending on travel to meetings and vacation days. The Executive Director's office was the largest of the four, with the President's and

Administrative Director's being equal in size, reflecting, in my mind, the importance of the Executive Director's role as the organization's representative in Anchorage. She would often be working in the office, when the President was traveling for meetings. Typically, I would work on the projects in either the Executive Director's office or the Administrative Director's office depending on the meetings they had scheduled for the day.

Therefore, each day I arrived at the office, I was not certain where I would be working, unless it was pre-arranged that I utilize an office of a vacationing employee. It might be that I spent several hours in the Executive Director's or the Administrative Director's office. It frequently meant that I was in an office where impromptu conversations revealed research relevant information. Such was the case one day when I was present during a spontaneous conversation between the Administrative Director and the Project Assistant in the Administrative Director's office. This conversation took place three days following the Arctic Imperatives Summit, held in Girdwood, a resort located forty miles south of the Anchorage airport. I was working in the Administrative Director's office when the Project Assistant walked in prompting a discussion of her experience at the Arctic Imperative Summit. The Project Assistant described how she felt overwhelmed by the amount of information presented at the Summit and while the three of us were sitting in this particular office in Anchorage, Alaska, I gained insight into the transnational elements helping to shape ICC-AK.

The Program Assistant found the Summit very informative, but said that she suffered from information overload. There were over sixty-five speakers at the Summit providing a variety of perspectives. From oil and gas development to issues concerning Alaska Indigenous peoples, the Summit was intended to convey the different views on development in circumpolar Alaska (Arctic Imperatives Summit 2011). The director, who watched the event via pod cast, commented that one of Alaska's Senators began his speech by stating that Alaska Natives want to be "consulted". She found it frustrating because they really want to be participants in resource development, and not just consulted. I noted this same issue was raised at the UNPFII in relation to the interpretation of prior and informed consent and the use of the term "consultation" as part of the United Nations Declaration of the rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Banks and governments interpret it as consultation, but Indigenous groups want more say in what happens.

My attendance at the UNPFII revealed to me the issues surrounding "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent" (FPIC). I attended a side event with the ICC-AK representative at which I made the following observations. Through the various presentations it became clear that Indigenous peoples around the world are asking for more participation in the decisions governments make that have an impact on their way of life. This is reflected in the FPIC that is outlined in the UNDRIP. As I noted above, individuals at ICC-AK are frustrated by how governments interpret FPIC as "consultation" and not "participation". A portion of the general meeting was concerned with comments related to the FPIC, and

delegates from various IPOs, governments and NGOs had the opportunity to express their views on the issue. A common theme expressed by the IPOs was the desire for participation as well as consultation in decisions pertaining to Indigenous lands, resources, and human rights. The various government responses depended on the nation-state that was expressing them.

The Canadian government representative, Jean-François Tremblay, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, made a point of stressing that the FPIC does not give "veto power" to Indigenous peoples, but should "focus on fostering partnerships to ensure that indigenous peoples are more fully involved, consulted and, where appropriate accommodated on development and other decisions that directly affect their rights and interest" (Tremblay 2011:1). The emphasis is on consultation and not on participation, and the Canadian representative further notes that the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples stated that the FPIC mechanism should be used as a framework for building consensus among all stakeholders through consultation procedures. The Government of Greenland's, Senior Policy Advisor, Marianne Lykke Thomsen, presented comments devised by Greenland in cooperation with Denmark regarding their interpretation of FPIC.

Thomsen, whose public government is made up of Inuit members, takes a different approach to FPIC. They suggest, "establishing good practices with respect to consultation and participation in decision-making with respect to resource development is extremely important" (2011:2). The Greenland government's inclusion of the term

"participation" provides for greater Indigenous people involvement in decision making, unlike the Canadian government, who stresses the limited involvement, by emphasizing that they cannot "veto" decisions, but will be "consulted". This highlights the different perspectives government's have regarding FPIC depending on the involvement of Indigenous people in the governmental institutions. Interestingly, these different perspectives are reflected in how the different ICC branch offices see the level of autonomy Inuit have in each country.

The ICC-AK Project Assistant noted that she is impressed with how progressive Canada is regarding Inuit – state relations, and she noted Canadian Inuit seem to have more "say" and the federal government provides more funding for Inuit initiatives. I have heard this sentiment from various ICC-AK individuals. There is a descending view that the Greenland Inuit have the most autonomy, followed by those in Canada, then Alaska in the United States, and finally Chukotka in Siberian Russian. As a Canadian, I find this assertion interesting, because I am very much aware of the ongoing struggles of all Indigenous peoples in Canada for more recognition of their rights to self-determination, which includes things like ensuring suitable housing, health care, and the participation in resource co-management. Returning to the UNPFII, the side events presented additional opportunities to observe the venues that enabled IPOs and NGOs to raise awareness about the issues of self-determination and sovereignty.

Many of the UNPFII side events with specific themes were attended by individuals from the national office independent of the entire ICC delegation. The

Executive Director of ICC-AK attended the "Food Sovereignty, Traditional Knowledge and Climate Change: Indigenous Peoples' Strategies for Adaptation and Survival" (Carmen 2011) because one of ICC-AK's specific initiatives is food security for Inuit of Alaska. Figure 3.1 is a photograph showing the side event attended by the ICC-AK representative.


Figure 3.1 UNPFII 2011 side event attended by ICC-AK representative (personal photograph)

The smaller side events were a means for an ICC representative to see how other Indigenous groups were approaching similar issues, such as food security, participation in decision making, land rights, poverty and development, health, and the economy. I attended the food sovereignty side event with the executive director, and as we filed into the meeting room, I noticed the cultural diversity of those in the room. The guest

speakers represented various organizations, from Latin American Indigenous Peoples, the North American Dene, Bangladeshi Indigenous peoples, and a member of the Guatemalan government, who acted as the meeting chair. Additionally, I found it intriguing that this Indigenous forum is physically laid out much the same as I imagine a non-Indigenous, Euro-Western forum would be structured, with a panel in the front comprised of speakers, and attendees sitting facing them. It occurred to me that many Native gatherings I have attended have people arranged in a circle, which seems to me to indicate a level of equality among the participants, bringing to mind the matter of Indigenous peoples utilizing the hegemonic society's structures in order to achieve their goals (Niezen 2000). Additionally, the UNFPII event raises questions about the insular nature of the venue.

While sitting next to the ICC-AK representative, before the event started, we chatted about ICC's presence at the UNPFII. It was her first time attending, even though she has held her position with ICC-AK for three years at that point. The ICC has Consultative Status II at the United Nations, granted in 1983, which allows them to represent the views of the circumpolar Inuit at the Forum. Conversation turned to how useful the UNPFII is for the advancement of Indigenous people's issues, and she mentioned that it can be difficult to determine the impacts the UNPFII has for local people living day to day in a particular country. As well, the focus seems to be heavily weighted towards human rights issues that may be on a different level than the ones ICC would like to see addressed. Many of the IPOs present at the Forum are hoping to have

issues concerned with genocide and more immediate life or death matters put forth for consideration. While, the ICC, though struggling with human rights issues as well, are more concerned with self-determination and sovereignty within their nation-states. Some matters seem more pressing than others, and it may be that the Arctic Council can provide a more suitable institution to find solutions to Inuit political autonomy. With its focus on the circumpolar region, The Arctic Council provides a more Inuit focused venue.

During fieldwork, I observed that depending on the country an ICC office exists in impacts which problem-solving institution is deemed most useful. I would argue that Greenland, with a majority Inuit population and an all Inuit public government, but with ties to Denmark, has greater autonomy within their nation-state than the Inuit of Alaska. There are no Inuit sitting on the State of Alaska or the federal governments, and the closest Inuit government entity that exists in Alaska is the North Slope Borough public government that is comprised of local Inuit, which, interestingly, is likely what enabled Eben Hopson to unite with Inuit leaders from the three other circumpolar countries containing substantial Inuit populations. These differences in degree of local autonomy inform the mechanism adopted to achieve goals directed towards self-determination. The Greenland ICC branch has a stronger relationship with their national government, due to cultural ties, while ICC-AK is constantly negotiating its relationships with non-Inuit government representatives. I believe this has direct impacts on the expression of political identity at the local level, and points to some elements of diversity within the

unified ICC organization. My time spent with the ICC delegation at the UNPFII highlighted some aspects of the greater issue of Indigenous unity.

## 3.2 Themes

I have chosen to devote a chapter to the exploration of three themes that are relevant to an investigation of Inuit political identity and transnational processes. This chapter is predominantly descriptive, relying on ethnographic support for the identified themes. The following chapter, chapter Four, enters into a deeper anthropological discussion in relation to the research question. The following themes emerged throughout the analysis process, and aid in an understanding of the relationship between a culture's political identity and the transnational processes that help shape them. The first theme, "unity within diversity" is an example of how the ICC-AK conceptualizes their cultural connections between nations and forms part of its representation to those within and outside the organization.

### 3.2.1 Unity Within Diversity

> That's one thing about ICC, for the most part, all of our country offices have the same agenda, although we may have different priorities, we're all on the same page about things, and we have similar experiences, a little bit different systems in terms of government and cultural systems. [Current ICC-AK Employee interview, July 21, 2011]

As the name of this theme implies and the above quote taken from an interview I recorded with a current ICC-AK employee, shows the ICC recognizes the different cultural systems within each nation-state while drawing on a pan-Inuit cultural identity. To further explore this theme, I conducted a content analysis of the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska Strategic Plan (2010a), a document derived from the international ICC's Nuuk Declaration and the initiatives mandated therein.

Content analysis is "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message" (Weber 1990:9). In the case of the ICC-AK Strategic plan, the sender is obviously ICC-AK, while the audience is intended to be Inuit members of the organization, non-member Inuit, and non-Inuit interested individuals. As I analyzed the Strategic Plan certain messages were revealed. One of the messages that I repeatedly encountered was of cultural continuity across nation-states. I noted eleven instances in the fourteen-page brochure. I was first struck by the use of the ICC logo on the cover of the document with the title of the ICC-AK below it. The logo, a stylized drum is also used by the regional offices, which can indicate a cultural connection between them. Likewise, there are instances of the use of words and phrases like "unity among Inuit of the circumpolar north" (ICC-AK 2010a:3) and "common Inuit cultural values" (ICC-AK 2010a:6). Moreover, the Strategic Plan indicates its purpose is to "Advance Inuit Culture and society at all levels" (ICC-AK 2010a:3). These phrases indicate a shared cultural solidarity the ICC-AK embraces. Pages thirteen and fourteen

break down the Nuuk Declaration (produced from the 2010 Nuuk, Greenland General Assembly) initiatives by regional office, and show how even though each office takes the lead on a particular initiative, the overall goal is to promote circumpolar Inuit objectives.

The ICC-AK Strategic Plan is just one example of the stated unity among diversity theme, being present at both the UNPFII (attended by representatives from each national office) and the ICC Executive Council Meeting (also attended by representatives from each national office) showed me the solidarity the ICC expresses through a pan-Inuit identity, while highlighting the differences among cultural and political aspects of each national office. For example, at the UNPFII during the general meeting concerning the signing of the UNDRIP, all the representatives made a point of sitting in the same area, showing their support for the Russian ICC representative's speech to the Chair of the UNPFII regarding the Arctic Caucus's response to the reading of the UNDRIP. Figure 3.2 is a photograph showing the main UNPFII meeting room with attending delegates, some of which are lined up to sign the UNDRIP.


Figure 3.2 UNPFII 2011 ICC seating in the main meeting (personal photograph)

Sitting with the ICC delegates, I was struck at the time by being surrounded by very diverse cultures, from various parts of the world, including Asia, Africa, South America. But, all were attending the UNPFII to have their voices placed on a public record concerning recognition of their human rights. The general meeting room was constantly shifting with people moving in and out between side events and the speeches presented at the general meeting. The political environment could be observed throughout the proceedings. When a speaker finished addressing the UNPFII panel, a paper was passed around that was signed by supporters from different Indigenous people's organizations. Additionally, support was expressed through clapping, and there was much encouragement of the youth speakers, highlighting a common element throughout the event that promoted the participation of young Indigenous people in the recognition of

their rights. Alliances between groups tended to emerge based on the caucuses they were affiliated with.

The UNPFII is arranged around the caucuses, which are based on geographic regions such as the Asia caucus. In the case of the ICC, they form part of the Arctic caucus, along with the Saami Council, which is comprised of Saami representatives from Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Leadership of the caucus alternates between each organization, with the ICC holding the position at the time fieldwork was conducted. The relationship between these two diverse organizations, exemplifies the political aspects involved with different groups joining together under a unifying structure to form a stronger entity. This mechanism can be seen at the ICC level as well, with their representation of "unity within diversity".

ICC can be seen as a microcosm of what occurs at the UNPFII. The parallels are reflected in the coming together of different groups. In the case of the UNPFII it is very diverse cultures, whereas the ICC brings together Inuit with some regional cultural differences, such as language dialects and national identities. It represents a larger general Indigenous unity, made up of diverse culture groups, but uniting under a shared purpose, that of promoting Indigenous people's human rights, which the UNPFII helps to facilitate. Similarly, the Executive Council Meeting (ECM) held annually in alternating country locations illustrates how unity is expressed by ICC representatives while embracing diversity. Through my participation as the meeting minute taker at the 2011 meeting in Nome, Alaska, I observed how the national branch representatives interact

with each other in a public forum, reporting on their activities for the past year and making suggestions for future actions. My attendance at the ECM was made possible through a collective effort.

Although I spent the summer as an unpaid intern, the ICC-AK lobbied the international ICC office for financial support to cover my hotel and stipend in Nome, in exchange for my services as minute taker, a task I was suited for due to my past experience in the legal profession. On a bright, sunny September evening I arrived in Nome, situated along the coast of the Bearing Sea. My flight into Nome caused me some confusion, not being familiar with the region. As the pilot announced our approach, my anticipation turned to concern when I did not see anything that looked like a city. In fact, I saw my first 'road to nowhere', extending from the center of the city, south along the coast several kilometers and then ending abruptly. There had already been an error with the flight arrival time, which was indicated on the itinerary to be two hours later than it actually landed, and it seemed reasonable to question if we were possibly also landing in the wrong location as well. Once we had landed I was reassured by the signage that it was indeed Nome. Certainly, the existence of a public library, a museum and Subway franchise fast food restaurant lend credence to the argument that Nome is a city, as does its incorporation as a city in April of 1901. My confusion did not stop there though, and I soon became aware of my shortcomings as someone who had never visited a remote Alaska community. Some reading this may find it amusing that I refer to Nome as "remote". Walking into the compact airport from the tarmac, I did like many travelers

and attempted to seek out a way to secure a taxicab, only to discover that the one public phone did not have a phone book attached. After a brief call to the ICC-AK Administrative Director, I determined there were in fact taxis in Nome; I just needed to call one. The attendant at the desk sorted things out by calling for transportation for me, and soon a shared shuttle van was whisking me and what appeared to be resource development experts, to the few hotels in the city. There was a great deal of activity during the meeting days, due to an overlap with the Beringia Days conference also happing in the city during that period, another transnational event that brought together stakeholders regarding the Bering Straits region to discuss issues related to international collaboration on marine mammals, Native observations of environmental change, shared heritage and Native languages. Some of the ICC executive council members were also presenting on matters discussed at the Beringia Days conference or attending the various events.

The two day-long ECM in Nome brought together the executive council form each of Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Siberia, with four representatives from Greenland, including the chair, two from Canada, four from Alaska, and one from Siberia. The meeting, conducted in a Kawerak boardroom, a regional Native corporation, resembled the structure adopted by other formal meetings I have attended in different settings and contexts. With the chair occupying a seat at the head of a rectangular table, the remaining executive council members and their support staff placed along each side. Unlike the UNPFII events, where the speakers were placed at the front of the room, with

the attendees facing them, the board room meeting gave the impression of equal importance of the attendees, and a round table discussion, with the exception of the chair being seated at the head of the table. The executive council members from each national branch grouped together around one half of the table. For example, the Greenland chair and two executive council members seated themselves together around one end of the table, while the two Alaska members sat beside one another. There were just one executive council members from each of Canada and Chukotka, with a translator seated next to the Chukotkan member. The support staff, made up of executive directors and administrators, was seated around the other half of the table, but were also grouped by national branch. I sat with the Alaska group, along with the new science advisor, administrative director and the executive director. The Alaska branch had the most attendees, with five, while the Chukotkan branch just had one. This I believe is due to the prohibitive cost of travel between Russia and Alaska, and if the ECM had not coincided with the Beringia Days conference being held simultaneously the Russian member may not have been able to make it to the meeting at all. The seating arrangement seem to reflect the solidarity between branch members, but also shows the hierarchical structure in the organization, with the Executive Council having more, or possibly different, authority over the support staff, much like any other corporate structure.

A prominent feature of cultural diversity among each national office is the language difference. Language is a clear marker of cultural difference, and as the

meeting attendees filed into the room, holding conversations with each other, in Russian, Greenlandic and English, it was clear that various attendees represented different countries. Most present were familiar with English, and so the proceedings were conducted in that language. But interestingly, at the passing of each motion, the Chair would alternate the "all in favor" word from each national language and included Iñupiaq (Alaska Inuit dialect), Inuktitut (Canadian Inuit dialect) and Kalaallit (Greenlandic Inuit dialect). Figure 3.3 is a photograph taken during a break from the Executive Council Meeting and shows attendees conversing with each other.


Figure 3.3 ICC Executive Council Meeting 2011 attended by representatives from all national offices (personal photograph)

ICC represents a group of people from a geographically large area, and within this area there is cultural continuity, but with some differences. Inuit language dialects are

somewhat different, as are the nation-state languages. Also, how the local ICC national offices interact with the local State institutions differs. ICC embraces the diversity, but seems to draw under one Inuit "umbrella" in order to support circumpolar initiatives, reflecting how ICC conceptualizes itself within the transnational network.

For the ICC-AK political identity is closely tied to what it means to be Inuit. Being affiliated with the other national offices provides a cultural connection that is mutually supportive to the overall ICC goal of representing Inuit at the international level. Each national office draws strength, culturally and politically, from their connections with each other. As the quotes in Chapter One describe, the inception of the ICC came from the vision of Eben Hopson, but was shared by Inuit throughout the circumpolar region. Inuit leaders from each region recognized Eben Hopson's concerns as similar to their own, and had the foresight to see the value in uniting politically through their shared cultural ties. Today, Eben Hopson continues to be an iconic figure in relation to Inuit political identity.

Much of the ICC documents, marketing materials, and comments made by individuals within the organization point to shared Inuit culture as an important element uniting Inuit across the circumpolar region. Marketing materials depict Inuit in culturally specific clothing, such as seal skin vests, and often include the Inuit language (different dialects depending on the country/region). Furthermore, as noted previously, the General Assembly appears to be a cultural celebration as well as an opportunity to conduct more formal organization business such as electing ICC representatives and creating the

declaration. Unfortunately, fieldwork did not coincide with the quadrennial general assembly, which took place the prior year but if I were to postulate, it would have provided a valuable opportunity to observe the interplay between the three themes explored in this section. The theme of "unity within diversity" expresses the perception of a shared culture across nations, but points to differences between each national Inuit culture. The next theme "consensus," is an aspect that shows how an NGO negotiates diversity within the organization.

### 3.2.2 Consensus in ICC-AK Decision Making

The theme, "consensus" illustrates how the ICC-AK conceptualizes their relationships with local membership, the other national offices, and the international organization as a whole. The matter of consensus is a concept that is comprehensively explored in ethnographic literature concerning Inuit cultures. For example, Fienup-Riordan notes with regard to her work with the Yup'ik in Alaska, "as with all other aspects of governance, the testimony on decision making emphasized 'talk' to arrive at 'one mind'. Decision making was largely by consensus within a fundamentally egalitarian and nonauthoritarian social order" (1990:214). For the Yup'ik, the power of the human mind and consensus are connected, and function as a social control due to the shared belief that disregarding the decision would prompt negative attitudes from others in the community. Avoiding such negativity required being attentive to the opinion of others and "when a problem needed to be resolved, community leaders met and stated their views. Ideally they made no decision until all had been heard, and continued talking

until they reached a consensus" (Fienup-Riordan 1990:215). This approach is reflected within the decision-making mechanisms of the ICC.

For the ICC "consensus" refers to the desire for full agreement from all branches on an initiative prior to moving forward on that project. The consensus mechanism embraced by ICC is observed in their documents and has been mentioned by representatives. ICC will not proceed with an initiative or issue if all the member offices are not in agreement on it. When asked if an initiative has been set aside due to non-consensus, I was told that it has not happened to-date.

It was often noted by those working with ICC that it is a consensus based organization, requiring each national office to provide insight and a mutually agreed upon decision to be reached. For example, all offices came together to produce the Resource Development Declaration 2011, which was presented at a side meeting during the UNPFII. A meeting held in Ottawa, Canada prior to the UNPFII brought together each national office to discuss the content of the Resource Development Declaration. From that meeting the international ICC organization produced a mutually agreed upon declaration outlining best practices and principles with regard to resource development in the circumpolar north, as well as the relationship between Inuit and resource development. I attended the UNPFII side event where the declaration was presented to a wider audience, including delegates representing the Saami Council and the "Green Answer" representative from Greenland. Each of the ICC delegates from Canada, Greenland and Chukotka spoke about their various perspectives regarding the mutually

agreed upon declaration, and the ICC chair described the process leading up to the declaration, which is also stated in a speech given by the ICC-AK president, Jim Stotts at the Arctic Imperatives conference in June 2011:

> Last summer ICC held its General Assembly in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. At our Assembly it was evident there were differences of opinion amongst Inuit on three issues. These issues were: offshore oil and gas; mining, particularly uranium mining; and the environmental and social impact assessment process.
>
> At our Assembly the Premier of Greenland suggested that ICC facilitate an Inuit Leaders Summit to discuss these three issues. ICC hosted the summit last February in Ottawa where our declaration was formulated. The declaration was launched publicly just prior to the Arctic Council Ministers meeting last month in Greenland. The premier of Greenland has offered to host a second Inuit Leaders Summit to further refine our position on development issues in the near future. So, our declaration is out in the open, a public document. [ICC-AK 2011]

Mr. Stotts' speech notes the various opinions within the ICC relating to resource development, and it became clear throughout the fieldwork process that certain offices

utilize different mechanisms and institutions to promote their goals, as would be predictable based on the various national levels of self-determination each branch has. From the predominantly Inuit territory, Nunavut in Canada, to Greenland's home rule, the Russian government's strong hold on all matters pertaining to Siberian Inuit, and Alaska's unresolved Inuit food security and resource management issues, there is a wide spectrum of national relationships between Inuit and the nation-state in the Arctic region.

The 2011 ICC Executive Council meeting highlights the various levels and approaches to priorities held by each national office, and the difficulties surrounding achieving consensus within such diverse contexts. At one point during the meeting, the executive council went into a private meeting, and all non-essential individuals present filed out so that the council could discuss an issue related to the inclusion of all the branches in ICC related decisions, specifically at the UNPFII. The ICC-AK pointed out that their office was not included in discussions concerning matters at the UNPFII, which was attended by representatives from each national branch, the previous May, and asked that there be more effort to ensure all branches are party to discussions.

Once the meeting resumed, the Chair made note for the record that there would be an appointment of an executive council member to coordinate the work concerning the United Nations and communicate with the executive council on the issues. Furthermore, he asked each country member to appoint an executive council member to attend those important meetings. He made a point of noting that the chair understands the importance

of communication and agrees that if it is a United Nations or Arctic Council meeting, they should coordinate work better and inform each other. All the executive council members agreed upon the matter. The process of consensus building was observable at the ICC Executive Council meeting, and it was evident that although it can be difficult to achieve consensus at all times, it was desirable to make it a priority to ensure all member offices were in agreement concerning ICC mandates and actions. This event reveals some interesting facets of the consensus processes.

For the ICC, consensus is the result of a process of constant negotiation requiring discussion between all the parties, with the goal of achieving cohesiveness and a united focus on a particular issue. From an anthropological perspective, the ability to achieve consensus can be viewed within identity formation. As noted in Chapter One, as a TSMO, the ICC's political identity is constituted by its association with the other branch offices. By embracing consensus, the ICC reinforces these bonds, fostering solidarity and enabling the organization to achieve goals at multiple levels, local, national and international. Kriesberg notes "as people work together to advance a particular goal, they strengthen their bonds and shared identity…In the case of a TSMO; it may mean an identity as a human rights advocate" (1997:15). In the case of ICC-AK, achieving consensus serves to strengthen their work for the recognition of Inuit rights, but it is a difficult process due to the differences in the relationships between the various ICC branch offices and the nation-states they inhabit. Consensus is based on attempting to establish a positive relationship among members within the ICC, while the next theme

"diplomacy" is the approach employed to establish positive relationships with stakeholders outside the NGO.

### 3.2.3 Diplomacy

ICC-AK conceptualizes diplomacy as the non-hostile approach to negotiations with governments, industry, and various other entities. Working one day in the Executive Director's office, the conversation between the two of us turned to the topic of ICC and diplomacy. We were discussing her previous experience working for a Native corporation, during which she considered herself more of a political radical, but she began to realize that change stands a better chance of coming about if they use the system that is in place. She emphasized the "diplomatic" approach ICC uses regarding their initiatives, and she joked that they stand a greater chance of achieving their goals if the ICC-AK president "doesn't tie himself to a tanker".

The theme of Diplomacy emerged early in the research process, was encountered frequently throughout, and was first noted during an interview with an ICC-AK Executive Council member, when discussing the relationship between the ICC-AK and the state of Alaska versus the U.S. federal government. This member reveals during an interview with me:

> For example, [the executive director] and I went down to Juneau and met with a number of the commissioners, we tried to meet with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, but both

were out of town when we were there. But anyway, to introduce ourselves and suggest areas we can cooperate, one thing we did was we suggested that when it comes to the Arctic, that the State should create a small group within the State structure, suggested strongly that it should be led by Lieutenant Governor, Mead Treadwell, because he's a person we know from his U.S. Arctic Research Commission days, he used to run that as a scientist, and he's very familiar, compared to most State bureaucrats and politicians, about the Arctic Council and how that works and science. So he's a natural to lead that effort. And I think our message fell on the right ears, because he actually was part of the U.S. Council ministerial meeting last month in Nuuk. We had a meeting with him…The State of Alaska under its current administration, I mean they're very strong on State's rights, they don't acknowledge the Arctic Council, they don't even acknowledge the Federal government half the time, but that's their choice. We have very diplomatically told them they're missing an opportunity for State influence. And if they're not careful it will have been all decided without them ever being at the meetings. Which is true. What is happening in the Arctic is

> really an international play and cooperation between the Arctic Council countries and international organizations. And the State of Alaska is nowhere in that discussion. [ICC-AK Executive Council Member interview, June 6, 2011]

This member's use of the term "diplomatically" I believe refers to the expression of the ICC-AK's opinions on the matter in a non-threatening and reasonable manner. As well, this quote highlights the relationship between the ICC-AK and the local state of Alaska government. When compared to public speeches by the president of the ICC-AK, a sense of how the organization relates at the local State level emerges.

A speech presented at the Northern Waters Task Force (NWTF) meeting is a clear example of how the ICC-AK approaches diplomacy with the State of Alaska:

> The NWTF is just starting its work and this is only its second hearing. So, timing is perfect to get things started out right, to ensure that the task force develops a balanced perspective moving forward. In ICC's opinion, the State of Alaska needs a more balanced perspective when it comes to development in northern waters and the Arctic Ocean. We believe the State's approach is too favorable on the side of development. In other words, resource development trumps all other considerations, including cultural, social and environmental considerations. We hope the task force will be able to get beyond this lopsided

> approach and come up with some ideas that the Inupiat can get behind. Without a balanced focus this could end up being a wasted effort.
>
> Sadly there is no representation from tribal organizations on the task force. The task force would benefit greatly from a tribal presence. The Arctic Council, the inter-governmental organization of the eight Arctic nations, charged with developing Arctic policy, has indigenous people's organizations as permanent participants. The newly formed US National Ocean Council also calls for a tribal presence. The State of Alaska should consider doing the same. This would give the State greater credibility and acceptance with the Inupiat, which is sorely needed at this time. [ICC-AK 2010b]

There are two items of interest contained in this quote, and I include it here due to its discursive relevance to an understanding of the interaction between the state of Alaska and the ICC-AK, and the matter of diplomacy. First, this quote appears to be confrontational, which seems to indicate a less diplomatic approach to the State of Alaska than what is indicated from the above interview with the Executive Council member. Second, the specific reference to the need for Iñupiat participation in the NWTF, and not all Alaska Inuit, despite an earlier section of the speech indicating that ICC-AK represents "Inuit from the North Slope, Northwest,

Bering Straits and Southwest Delta regions of the state" (ICC-AK 2010b), may simply be a result of the location of the meeting in Barrow, Alaska, but may also highlight the intricacies of representation between a national organization and the local people they represent. At the moment the ICC-AK employees are predominantly Iñupiat. It is worth contemplating how much influence cultural background has on the pursuit of an organization's goals.

Returning to the issue of diplomacy, from the ICC-AK perspective, it is important to see that there has been little negotiation with the State regarding recognition of Inuit self determination. Much of the political conversation concerning this issue has occurred at the federal government level in the U.S., which has in turn influenced the political identity the ICC-AK represents at the various levels. This returns the discussion to the differential application of diplomacy. My understanding is that ICC takes a middle road approach with their initiatives that balances the cultural, economic, and political needs of Inuit. In their view, the radical approach to issues clouds them and does not produce the desired results. They embrace a process of negotiation, but stand firm on issues relating to Inuit interests, such as food security. ICC wants to be part of the decision making process with regard to all matters that impact them, and feel that using the political systems that are in place, even though they are non-Inuit constructs, will produce better long-term results for Inuit which is directly tied to how ICC-AK conceptualizes their place in the political milieu.

As noted, it has been expressed by representatives with ICC-AK that it stands a better chance of achieving goals with a diplomatic approach. Many of the ICC initiatives have the potential to place the organization at odds with various levels of formal government within each nation-state, as well as against resources development organizations. The following quote made by an Executive Council member during an interview with me, expresses this sentiment more clearly:

> I think the solutions will not be legal solutions, but political solutions. I think we move ahead when everybody that gets to be involved in the decision comes to realize that's the way to do it. Not that you win some lawsuit. That's not the way to do it. Laws are made and laws are changed. In my lifetime I've seen where we actually were right as far as the law went, but were still wrong, because the law was changed or interpreted another way. So the solutions are political solutions. We indentify ourselves as Inuit, and we have goals and we have things we want. And to get those things, other people outside our group have to agree that we can have them. Those are political solutions. That's how I approach it. [ICC-AK Executive Council Member interview, June 6, 2011]

A close reading of the above quote points to ICC-AK conceptualization of how best to achieve its goals. It shows that confronting an issue concerning Inuit rights with legal

mechanisms has failed in the past, and so the preferred approach is to garner support politically. This is an interesting realization, as it highlights ICC-AK perception that the formal nation-state institutions may not be the best venue to achieve Inuit goals regarding self-determination in Alaska.

A meeting at ICC-AK office between the United States Coast Guard Commandant, the president and the executive director of ICC-AK provided an opportunity to experience the diplomatic approach first hand. The Commandant visit to ICC-AK was an unusual one. It is usually the norm that the president and/or the executive director attends meetings at locations outside the ICC-AK offices, where they are asked to present the Inuit perspective on various matters concerning climate change and resource development. Therefore it caused some excitement in the offices ICC-AK shared with the North Slope Borough in Anchorage when the Federal Bureau of Investigation and various security personnel arrived in the to ensure the location would be safe for the Commandant's visit to discuss the U.S. coast guard presence in Arctic waters.

The meeting highlighted new interest in the Arctic waterways and the people who live near them and use them for day-to-day subsistence, such as Native peoples. This is due to both the U.S. Coast Guards Admiral's and the Commandant's career experiences in Alaska. They appear to be interested in incorporating Native coastal reality in marine shipping policy. The Coast Guard is concerned with search and rescue in the Arctic and how it will impact local communities. It was relayed that the he mentioned during a

recent exercise in Barrow, Alaska the importance of local knowledge and expertise. The Commandant's interest coincides with ICC-AK's who expressed they would like to see "people" placed higher on the list of important matters in relation to shipping. One employee noted it should be up at the top with icebreakers and other large issues concerning Arctic marine shipping. Arctic Marine shipping is just one aspect of development in the North requiring incorporation of the human aspects.

As previously noted, in June 2011 the president of ICC-AK was asked to speak at the Arctic Imperatives conference, concerned with economic development in Alaska. His speech was focused on presenting the need for further exploration of the human dimensions of development in Alaska. A section of the speech, I believe, points to the theme of "diplomacy" when he states:

> ICC is not opposed to responsible sustainable development. It's evident to us development will occur. The Inuit future is tied to the development of the Arctic's resources. It's a new world and it's not possible for us to go back to the good old cold days. The planet is warming. The sea ice and permafrost is melting. We can see it with our own eyes. Our world is on the verge of being turned upside down. [ICC-AK President, Jim Stotts Arctic Imperative Speech June 2011]

Within this statement is an explicit awareness that Inuit are not opposed to development, but implied is the desire to have an impact on how that development

is realized. The speech continues to hint at the need for more involvement of the State of Alaska in decisions concerning resource development and their international impacts, which is a common theme in the ICC-AK president's speeches to do with matters concerning Inuit. The issue of diplomacy is does not just arise in relation to ICC-AK and State interactions, but exists at the international level as well.

When discussing the role of the United Nations with respect to diplomacy, a former ICC employee I interviewed who was involved with the early development of ICC, and currently associated with the UNPFII notes the UN provides:

> The set of tools to promote solidarity amongst Indigenous Peoples, thereby creating a more visible and powerful force to encourage nations such as the powerful U.S. to apply pressure on them, to hopefully turn things around. As far as day-to-day struggles, it has added a different direction to further Inuit & other Indigenous people's issues. The world at the UN and other international fora is significant. Also, the dynamic of it, important as far as the transnational, is specifically relevant as far as self-determination. Throughout the debate, in the UN declaration, nations tried to separate out and confine the rights of Indigenous peoples as internal, but if you think about Inuit and the work of the UN, this is an external expression. This is

> our diplomacy, our negotiation with those outside our communities. You can't separate out the internal from the external. Discussion and expression with others. Inuit expression at international mechanisms. It is an external expression of Inuit rights to self determination. That is one area people tend to over look with regard to ongoing diplomacy and dialogue with others. [Former Early ICC Employee interview, August 15, 2011]

This captures the essence of political identity construction, and the connections between cultural unity and diplomacy. Drawing on a number of the above quotes, I reason it is an ongoing negotiation with those outside the ICC for recognition of Inuit rights within the ICC, that drives much of the political identity expressed to the broader world. I explore this further in Chapter Four when discussing the relationship between the nation-state, ICC-AK and political identity construction.

# Chapter 4 Transnational Processes and Political Identity

In order to contextualize the themes described in Chapter Three within an anthropological framework, I return to the theories arising from migrant studies. I believe they have salience within non-migrant, or Indigenous, studies concerning transnational identity construction, due to their focus on cross-national cultural connections. This chapter attempts to bring together the various threads involved in political identity construction and transnational processes through an application of theories developed by Vertovec (2009), Gledhill (1994), and Hannerz (1996).

With regard to political identity Vertovec describes a process of "framing" that occurs with social movements (2009:44). "The framing process.... seems to describe the core process of ethnic community formation whereby groups in migration/minority situations self-consciously reflect upon their identities, symbolically define ethnic group boundaries, and organize themselves for the purpose of political empowerment" (Vertovec 2009:44). Moreover, the framing process is a collective and conscious one based on "shared meanings and definitions with which people legitimate, motivate and conduct their collective activities" (Vertovec 2009:44). This is a process I was able to observe and is supported by the themes described herein.

The themes, "unity within diversity", "consensus", and "diplomacy", each relate to the ICC-AK's conscious reflection on its own identity. The ICC-AK frames its political identity through the concepts of a shared culture with distinctive national elements, agreement between all members of the organization, and concern with finding an agreed

upon position with those outside the organization that have a direct impact on matters concerning Inuit. Furthermore, these are concepts that embody the values embedded in the outward representation of these themes to the rest of the world. By framing the ICC-AK political identity in this way, the NGO mobilizes across national borders to achieve political goals. Looking more closely at "diversity", I now turn to Hannerz (1996) to assist in deconstructing this element, aiding in an understanding of the nation-state's role in identity construction.

Hannerz (1996) applies a linguistic term to his conceptualization of the various influences on culture resulting in a newly "creolized" construction, and when speaking of "diversity" as a key concept of creole culture he states "The diversity in question involves mostly rather recent confluence of separate and quite different traditions, set in the global context, this tends to mean that they have their historical roots in different countries" (Hannerz 1996: 67). With the caveat that he is not implying that the separate cultures are by any means "pure", "homogenous", or "bounded" (Hannerz 1996:67). But, that these separate cultures are "identifiable" as different at the moment of "creolization" (Hannerz 1996:67).

As noted previously, the ICC unites under a pan-Inuit umbrella, within a social movement framework, in order to promote political goals concerning Inuit in the circumpolar region. It also shows that Inuit are diverse, depending on their nation-state of origin. Hannerz (1996) has in mind the flow of cultures across borders that combine, producing a new creolized entity. I would agree that these processes are certainly factors

influencing Inuit political identity construction today, as is seen by the differences between national offices. In fact, the movement of Inuit around the world is just as common as with any other culture. One of the ICC-AK presidents lived in Greenland for some time where he met his wife, who now lives in Anchorage, Alaska. Contrarily, I argue that the more pronounced creolization that has occurred may have more to do with the mixing of Inuit culture with the local national identity, producing unique representations at the local level.

As a circumpolar culture, Inuit existence in the region pre-dates national demarcations. As noted in Chapter One, there existed cultural relatedness across vast distances prior to colonial contact with non-Inuit peoples. The descriptions provided by individuals associated with ICC-AK of attending the ICC general assembly and encountering those from other countries with the same last name as theirs, and the celebration at the same assembly of shared cultural values, supports the notion of Inuit cultural continuity throughout the circumpolar today. These elements of shared culture point to trans-cultural connections that would become transnational ones after the establishment of nation-states and the impacts of globalization. Transnational processes and its sustained cross border relationships becomes a response to the rise of nation-states and the creation of borders in a globalized world. The issue of diversity is relevant at the national level, where borders can shape cultural identity. Each ICC national office contends with a nation-state, producing a specific identity locally. The national language is the one adopted predominantly by each national office, with some multilingual use.

The use of a Russian translator at the Executive Council meeting is an example of the linguistic differences. As well, the people working in each national office take part in local national celebrations through national holidays, such as the fourth of July, Independence Day, in the United States, and find a sense of community locally. I found this to be the case during fieldwork when in Anchorage I was able to observe the Independence Day festivities.

There are differing degrees of national association that created an issue when attempting a comparison between the ICC branch offices and draw conclusions. During this research project difficulties emerged surrounding an attempt to ensure that the level of ICC office being discussed coincided with the political level of state, nation-state, or international. The challenge became to try to match the ICC office level with a national one, which caused a conundrum to say the least. The name ICC-Alaska suggests an association at the state level, ICC-Greenland at the national level, ICC-Canada also at the national level, and ICC-Chukotka at the regional level. When discussing ICC-AK and its political identity is it possible to draw inferences based on its relationship with the State of Alaska, or should the inferences be based on their relationship with the United States? ICC-AK seems to identify most as part of the State of Alaska, but clearly Alaska is part of the broader United States, whereas the ICC-Greenland case seems less complicated because the name suggests a relationship between the local office and the national level. Upon further reflection, Greenland's ties to Denmark may still have an impact on its political identity creation. This speaks to the complexities in attempting to understand

the processes involved in political identity construction. If it becomes difficult to determine how to describe the association between a transnational social organization and the nation-state, we may need to identify more precise investigative tools. But, it should be noted that for the ICC, the issue might be mute. What is important is not that the four nation-states are represented, but that all Inuit are represented.

I argue that the above noted themes indicate that Inuit political identity, although tied to the physical movement of peoples across borders, is not primarily influenced by an Inuit diaspora, but a long standing historical pan-Inuit relationship predating the creation of nation-states in the circumpolar north. When describing the early creation of the ICC, during an interview with me, a former employee noted how it was incidental meetings out on the land that facilitated cross-national conversations concerning Inuit issues. She recalled stories told about Iñupiaq and Yup'ik hunters from Alaska occasionally coming in contact with hunters from the Russian Far East, creating opportunity to share information (Former ICC-AK Employee interview, August 15, 2011). Similarly, a current ICC-AK employee from Shishmaref, a village on Sarichef Island located in the Chukchi Sea, noted when speaking with me that it is speculated that her great grandfather had part Russian ancestry due to Shishmaref's proximity to Siberian Russia (Current ICC Employee interview, July 21, 2011). Both anecdotes highlight the early and ongoing transnational connections in which Inuit engaged despite national demarcations.

Furthermore, the themes of "consensus" and "unity within diversity" can illuminate some of the nuances involved with transnational influence on local political identity. The goal of reaching consensus within the ICC lends authority to the organization as a united NGO at the international level. With different political requirements being promoted in each nation, the various ICC branches cannot help but be separated in their local pursuits. It is mutually agreed by all offices that the ICC-AK Food Security initiative is very important and all voice support for this goal, but much of the work towards achieving the goal will occur at the local Alaska level, where focus groups will be organized and strategies determined through consultation with local hunters.

As noted in Chapter One, looking at the ICC structure can help facilitate an exploration of ICC-AK political identity. At the local level, political identity can be seen to connect between the ICC-AK memberships organizations, such as Kawerak Corporation located in Nome, Alaska and ICC-AK. The involvement of representatives on the ICC-AK board of directors ensures a local perspective is present at both the national and international levels. The local membership hosts meetings, such as the ICC Executive Council meeting, with a focus on international Inuit concerns. This melding of the local and the international was observable by the number of local Iñupiaq and Yup'ik residents in attendance at the ECM. Their attendance provided a local flavor to the proceedings, through their comments and in one instance the sharing of food dishes prepared with locally harvested foods.

Likewise, the ICC-AK representatives make frequent trips to villages of predominantly Inuit residents to meet with the local membership. It was noted during a board meeting the multiple trips planned to various villages in order to consult with the members and get input on ICC-AK activities. While conducting fieldwork in the ICC-AK offices, I was aware of the trips made by employees to the villages, either directly through the ICC-AK or by way of affiliated organizations. To further investigate how ICC-AK political identity is influenced by the membership I recount a conversation I had in the office one day with a current ICC-AK employee.

We discussed ICC's role in organizing meetings to bring together various interested parties concerning sustainable development and climate change in Alaska. It appears that outside organizations, such as the village corporations, non-profit organizations and the boroughs, would like ICC to arrange a meeting, and include ICC Canada in it. It was noted that there are assumptions about what ICC represents, either corporate interest or environmental issues. Some from other Alaska Native organizations see ICC-AK as focusing too much on corporate issues, while those outside the Alaska Native organizations tend to see ICC as an environmental group, when in fact, ICC-AK sees itself as balanced between the two. This comment points to the negotiation that occurs regarding political identity and how the ICC-AK is represented to those outside the organization, with differing views on the political motivations ICC-AK embraces. This view is supported by the following statement made by an executive council member during an interview with me:

> We try to get a state of Alaska common position, not always possible, but mostly it is, and take those positions to Washington, D.C. and the Arctic Council, and where ever we are meeting, and those are our positions. So, ICC is charged with representing Inuit at the international level. Lately, and this is kind of different for ICC-AK, we're getting requests from our membership to attend meetings. Normally, or in the past, we didn't, and I think that is because our membership is coming of age to realize ICC has some benefits. Not only at the UN and Arctic Council, but could have benefit at the local level, the state level discussion. [ICC-AK Executive Council Member interview, June 6, 2011]

The consensus theme can be witnessed here with regard to the ICC-AK's desire to determine a common position on issues locally through the membership, before expressing them at the national and international levels. The beginning of the above quote that states "We try to get a state of Alaska common position...and take those positions to Washington, D.C. and the Arctic Council" indicates the desire to achieve consensus on matters locally. This statement indicates a broader application of the theme than described above, as it involves not just consensus among the various ICC branch offices, but among the ICC-AK membership, through the ICC-AK board of directors. The local membership has an impact on how the ICC-AK represents itself at the international level,

which reveals the political identity influence from the local state level to the international one.

The processes involved in political identity construction become salient when considering a transnational organization's relationship to the nation-state. When speaking of political identity a look at the influences of international regulatory bodies assists in a fuller understanding of the processes producing them. I draw connections between the themes "diplomacy" and "unity within diversity," John Gledhill's (1994) and Hannerz's (1996) theories concerning the demise of the nation, and the use of the nation-state apparatus by oppositional movements to achieve political goals. Trade barriers and restrictions are a concern for the ICC, which has engaged in an initiative to promote more open trade of culturally specific products, such as those related to the movement of sea mammals listed as endangered by the Convention for International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

CITES, specifically, is an international mechanism designed to control the trade of endangered species throughout the world, and was brought into force in 1975. Trading country sanctions are ensured by "subjecting imports and exports of species listed in three appendices to mandatory licensing, with permits and certificates issued by Management authorities in trading countries in accordance with specific criteria" (Reeve 2006:881). The implicit goal of CITES is to ensure wild animal and plant specimens are not threatened through international trade (Reeve 2006:881).

Each state has different administrative needs, added to that are the various international conventions governing the trade and transport of species throughout the world, such as the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA) and the Migratory Birds Act between Canada and the United States, creating a complex process to negotiate. One convention may sanction a particular species that another does not, but it is up to the individual transporting the materials to do their due diligence and determine if they require a permit.

Individuals affiliated with ICC and employed by the ICC-AK office describe events that highlight the difficulties Inuit face when attempting to transport cultural materials containing restricted species, such as seal skin vests, across national borders. As a member of the group responsible for ICC's early beginnings states when I spoke with them:

> The only tangible part that we saw in terms of barriers and obstructions, and a clear line in the sand so to speak in terms of the international was in regard to customs. Even in 1977 when the North Slope Borough hosted the first gathering in Barrow, in June, customs and immigration flew officials to Barrow to make sure we were going to behave consistent with CITES convention for example, and all these other impositions. We had people whose seal skin vests were taken away. [Former ICC Employee interview, August 15, 2011]

On the other hand, there are also instances when violating regulations did not lead to confiscations. Two individuals told me of situations when they were with groups transporting raw sea mammal or other restricted sea mammal products, and despite not meeting the required permits were allowed to retain the materials. They felt that there was an implied understanding by the customs officials of the difficulties of obtaining a permit, or even knowing which regulation applied.

The "diplomacy" theme is relevant to a discussion concerning how the ICC-AK relates to international regulatory bodies, such as CITES and the MMPA. It is through the formal channels that ICC has made strides in addressing the issue of trade restrictions on cultural materials and products. At the same time, drawing on a shared Inuit cultural identity to support cultural claims that restrictions are harmful to Inuit and their culture. Gledhill describes how oppositional movements, despite claims for sovereignty and autonomy from a nation-state, often operate through the nation-state apparatus, and cites constitutional amendments and recognition of specific ethnic rights as examples of this phenomenon (1994:20). Trade barriers are physical representations of the restricted movement of culture across borders.

A press release issued by the ICC May 17, 2011 reports on the latest developments concerning the importation of polar bear skins from Canada to the U.S. The bears, killed prior to the polar bear being placed on the Endangered Species Act list, were confiscated and placed in storage under the MMPA. Pressure from special interest groups like the ICC, resulted in support by a U.S. House subcommittee on natural

resources to pass Bill (H R 991) allowing the American hunters to import the bear skins into the U.S. (ICC Press Release 2011). This example illustrates how a group opposing the imposed regulations set by governing bodies, such as the ICC, through diplomatic means and working with the state apparatus was able to achieve a political goal, or not just political but cultural goal, as the ICC press release notes:

> Inuit question the ethics of opponents who argue the Bill would threaten US global conservation efforts. Canadian Inuit communities are involved in the careful management of conservation hunts, which bring economic benefit to entire communities, while simultaneously guarding Inuit values in subsistence hunting. Inuit are confident that most Americans would support these values. [Inuit Circumpolar Council 2011]

This shows the impact of the international regulations on the local Inuit cultures and the responses they provoke from oppositional organizations, like the ICC, who rely on the established nation-state institutions to accomplish political goals. Closely tied to the mechanism of adopting the state apparatus as a solution to issues is the ICC political identity. Research results show that political identity is influenced by cross border connections, but despite the shared Inuit culture across national boundaries, I believe there is the continued importance of the nation-state in influencing how political identity manifests itself within each nation. The "unity within diversity" and "diplomacy" themes can be used to understand the

connections between the nation-state and ICC-AK political identity. Here I return to the discussion from Chapter One addressing transnational processes and the nation-state.

The individual focus of each national office on issues that seem most relevant to them reveals some key points regarding political identity construction and the nation-state, which becomes apparent when looking at the relationship between the Alaska ICC and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), influencing Alaska Inuit political identity since the 1970s. As noted previously, the ICC-AK Food Security initiative is directly related to ANCSA, and its extinguishment of Native subsistence rights. Subsistence rights in Alaska reflect the Inuit association with the world around them, which in turn informs the ICC-AK political identity. Chance notes when exploring questions of cultural identity "the Iñupiat of Alaska's North Slope are having to address...problems common to circumpolar and similar hunting and gathering peoples who have become actively involved in the economic, social, and political life of industrial society. Of these problems, one that often produces the greatest apprehension is the people's fear of losing their land. Every culture needs a material foundation for its continuity" (1990:6). It is not just subsistence, or acquiring what you need to survive that is the issue, but deeply embedded cultural beliefs surrounding food sharing responsibilities to others, and a sense of stewardship of the land. A get together at the end of the summer that I attended with my fellow ICC-AK employees illustrates the importance of food, food sharing, and the ties to the land.

To bid farewell to the summer interns (myself included), the Executive Director and the Administrative Director organized a *Nigipiaq Night*, which translates as "real food" and refers to the specific foods and their preparations enjoyed by Inuit in Alaska. The impetus was a casual conversation in the office between the Executive Director, the Administrative Director and me. I very much enjoyed hearing them describe the various ways to prepare different sea mammals and fish, and would ask questions, even bringing into the office a small booklet containing Inuit recipes called "Eskimo Cookbook" that was produced in 1952 by the Alaska Crippled Children's Association. The recipes were collected by Shishmaref school children and describe the local cultural foods and their preparations. Being from Shishmaref, the Executive Director recalled this little cookbook, and it was interesting to hear her reminisce about the recipes. So, I was thrilled when the Executive Director mentioned the upcoming event, and it was arranged to take place at the Administrative Director's home.

The day of the get-together arrived, and I was enlisted to assist with some of the food preparation. The prospect of learning some Inuit recipes was very exciting, but I was apprehensive about the outcome, not having made dishes with Inuit foods before, and experienced performance anxiety when I was told I would be in charge of the *aqpik* pies. The Administrative Director eased my concerns by assuring me that she would help me through it. Not only did the event give me an opportunity to experience Inuit foods, but also provided an opportunity to interact with my fellow ICC-AK employees in a social setting, something that I did not have the chance to do during the preceding months

due to intensive travel, work and social schedules. The Administrative Director's home is in a suburban section of Anchorage, with a high concentration of families and a feeling of removal from the hustle and bustle of the main parts of the city, which provided a casual background to the evening's festivities. I arrived at the home and was quickly put to work on the pies, which were based on a recipe the Administrative Director acquired via a popular social networking website inquiry. The Executive Director arrived shortly after I did, and began working on a *tuttu* (caribou) stew that would have a rice accompaniment. The evening's menu consisted of samples of *muktuk* (whale skin and blubber), *ugruk* (bearded seal), *paniqtaq* (dried fish), and dishes prepared with *iqalugruaq* (salmon), *tuttu* (caribou), and *aqpik* (salmonberry). The various foods actually made their way from a number of village communities, either through kinship networks and friends or personal hunting and gathering, to our table in Anchorage. The communities of Shishmaref, Barrow, and Kotzebue were well represented, which highlights the continued importance of access to the land for food collecting and the stress on food sharing between community members and urban Inuit in Anchorage (Lee 2002).

The remaining guests arrived, including the President, the science advisor, the project assistant, and the one other intern working on projects for ICC-AK over the summer, including their spouses and children. It was an intimate gathering with an emphasis on sharing Inuit culture with those of us not familiar with it, the science advisor, her spouse and me. Having the chance to work with and observe the preparation of Inuit foods with the people who value them the most, allowed me to witness firsthand

the push for recognition of subsistence rights in Alaska and ICC-AK's focus on the Food Security initiative.

Additionally, being invited to the *Nigipiaq Night* reflects the level of inclusion I was extended by the employees of ICC-AK. As an anthropologist, this kind of acceptance is done with a high degree of trust on behalf of the people you study. With that in mind, this thesis does not present an "exposé" piece of work as such, but represents a desire to produce a work with more substantial and broader theoretical application; therefore, I do not include specific details about individuals or events. Furthermore, it should be noted that the fieldwork with ICC-AK records a particular point in the organization's, and by extension the employee's, existence. This is a "snap shot" in time; situations and people change and revealing every detail would not contribute to the production of broader inferences. Therefore, being invited to this intimate dinner with its environment of trust brought home to me the importance of access to Inuit food sources through subsistence rights.

The issues of subsistence rights and food security are important to all Inuit across the circumpolar region, but the degree of self-determination differs depending on the nation-state the Inuit group resides in. Specifically, with regard to the ICC-AK and the matters directly related to ANCSA. As noted previously, ANCSA is an agreement arising from the early land claims between Native peoples, the United States federal and Alaska governments in 1971. A report published by Justice Thomas Berger, a Canadian judge commissioned by the ICC in 1985 to investigate the post-ANCSA realities Native

peoples faced in Alaska at the time, succinctly describes the formulation of ANCSA and the outcomes felt a decade later.

The settlement extinguished Alaska Native Aboriginal title to lands in Alaska, as well as hunting and fishing rights, in exchange for title to forty-four million acres of land and a monetary compensation of $962.5 million. Congress legislated that the funds be managed by Native corporations throughout the state, both village and regional, with shares passed to Native shareholders who enrolled in 1971 with their local village and regional corporations (Berger 1985:24). This land settlement structure has had unforeseen problems, as it allows for the sale and taxation of lands. "These corporate structures put the land at risk. For Native land is now a corporate asset. Alaska Natives fear that, through corporate failure, corporate take-overs, and taxation, they could lose their land" (Berger 1985:6). The extinguishment of Natives rights to the land and the resulting tenuous hold on them have colored the ICC-AK and state relations in the past, and continue to do so today. I wish to describe briefly these historical elements in order to provide background to the importance of the nation-state in local Inuit political identity in Alaska, as expressed, during interviews I conducted, by individuals associated with ICC-AK.

The following quote identifies the political "mood" surrounding ANCSA in the 1970s.

> The Civil Rights Movement and further encroachment of non-Native peoples on Native lands, and me personally, you could

> see it, it was tangible, came out of the pipeline generation. Even in middle school I was aware of ANCSA, and what it meant for Alaska Native people. Never understood how one people could "extinguish" the rights of another people. How could the State legislation go through with what is diametrically opposed to what my own grandparents were about? At the time I wasn't aware of the international covenants of Native rights to subsistence.... that was the mood and the realization of many. [Former Early ICC Organizing Employee interview, August 15, 2011]

Today, ANCSA remains a driving force behind local Alaska ICC priorities due to what is considered outstanding matters related to living resource use, specifically hunting, fishing and gathering rights. Once again taken from an interview I had, the next quote summarizes the perspective ICC-AK has with regard to ANCSA.

> Oddly enough, or not so oddly enough, Alaska was really the first settlement of Inuit territory of anybody in the world, which was a part of ANCSA. So we have the settlement. I always say it's an incomplete settlement of Indigenous rights because self-determination and access to resources, living resources, things like that, were off the table. The only thing that was talked about was land, which there was a title to land

> and money for land, very unusual for that time anyway, structure to receive the land and money in these corporations and so on.... I would say that there's unfinished business for our people in Alaska. There's still issues with access to fish and game, serious issues, which is today ICC-AK's number one priority to work on, and there are also issues with self government and self determination, uh, there are issues... It's an ongoing process. I hate to say this but of the three leading countries (Chukotka is a totally different issue), we're probably behind after being [the founding nation]...Greenland is clearly on its way, if it chooses to be a country. And, in Canada they have vastly superior settlements and Indigenous rights than we do. [Current Executive Council Member interview, June 6, 2011]

At the core of the relationship between the state of Alaska and the ICC-AK is how the ICC-AK responds politically and represents itself regarding its dealings with the state of Alaska. Despite the ICC-AK being part of a larger pan-Inuit identity, it also formulates a local identity that is expressed when attempting to deal with matters at the state level. I argue, and believe this is supported by Hannerz (1996), that the nation-state, and national identity, remains relevant even when faced with transnational cultural/political influences as is witnessed with the ICC-AK's interactions with both the

nation-state and the international regulatory bodies. ICC-AK responds politically at the local level by necessity to solve issues locally. Hannerz (1996) believes that "for a great many people, the idea of the nation is still largely in place...It still encompasses virtually all their social traffic, and offers the framework for thinking about past and future" (90). I once again reflect on the theme "unity within diversity" when contemplating the nation as a framework that the ICC-AK negotiates in order to promote Inuit interest locally. The "diversity" expressed in this theme, I contend, can be observed through how the ICC-AK consciously constructs a political identity that is brought to bear when interacting with the state frameworks.

Indigenous Peoples NGOs draw strength across national borders, but form within a nation-state, with which they also share cultural elements. The sustained transnational affiliations they establish become part of how they frame their political identity, but I argue that underlying the transnational political identity are influences from within the nation-state, creating diverse national identities within the unified whole. Also, I ask whether it is possible to explore transnational processes from an Indigenous perspective, or whether they only can be observed by looking at migrant communities. This case study is an illustration of the benefits of investigating transnational processes through an Indigenous lens.

The themes, "unity within diversity", "consensus", and "diplomacy" help us in understanding the interplay between Inuit political identity and transnational processes. The discussion revealed the complexity, and the many levels that political identity draws

on and in turn influences. The final chapter summarizes this work in its entirety, offers suggestions for further investigations, and makes some final points concerning Inuit political identity and transnational processes.

# Chapter 5 Conclusion

When reading about the fieldwork process, anthropology students are often told that it is the sudden bursts of insight that can make all the difference in making inferences while in the field. I experienced such a moment when chatting with the ICC-AK Administrative Director one afternoon. We were talking about the Canadian Inuit relationship with the Canadian government, and it suddenly occurred to me that Alaskan Inuit know more about Canadian Inuit than many Canadians. It was that moment that crystallized some of the notions surrounding transnational processes and, in the case of the Inuit, the north – south knowledge divide that exists within nations. Answering the questions of what are transnational processes, and how do they interplay with ICC political identity permitted a focused look at the research question, which is how do transnational processes influence political identity?

I found that ISMs connect across nation-states through shared cultural ideologies and symbols, but because they form within the nation-state and are often in response to activities directly related to the nation-state, they also contain local influences on their political identity. I then show that the early creation of the ICC within the ISM framework later transforms into an Indigenous Peoples NGO, and point out issues relating to representation. Is it possible for an NGO to represent and speak for all the individuals categorized within its demarcations? In the case of ICC-AK, does the organization speak for all culture groups, such as the Yup'ik? Or, does the predominantly Iñupiat presence within the formal structure of the organization mean that

non- Iñupiat voices have less influence? Is there even a difference in goals or desire? Further research concerning the multi-vocal nature of an Indigenous NGO like ICC could illuminate the intricacies that help shape these organizations, possibly promoting greater understanding of the social processes involved with NGO formations and structures. I proposed that anthropology shift its focus to include Indigenous transnational processes within its scope of investigation in order to better understand how political identity is constituted locally, at the nation-state level.

I focused on the fieldwork, the ethnographic method applied and perspective the project arose within, in order to contextualize the work contained in this thesis and the emergent themes of "unity within diversity", "consensus", and "diplomacy". Research revealed the nuances related to each of these themes, supported by ethnographic description. Finally, I entered into discussion that showed how each of the themes sustain and construct Inuit political identity, both transnationally and locally. I made broader theoretical connections to how cultures frame their identity through representations, highlighted the relationship between ICC-AK and the nation-state through a discussion of their Food Security initiative, and then looked at how the ICC-AK case study can reflect the situation of Indigenous Peoples NGOs and the transnational processes.

I suggest that anthropological investigations should seek to understand how culture is reconstituted within the nation-state. We can turn to the ICC as an example. Each ICC national office operates within a particular country, which entails responding to

that country's issues in a particular manner. Despite Inuit cultural unity throughout the circumpolar region, each national office has its own national cultural displays, language being one of the more prominent features. The Siberian office members speak predominantly Russian; while Greenlandic ICC functionaries speak Greenlandic, and Alaskans and Canadians speak English (Inuktituk is spoken more in Canada). This shows the local national influences impacting each branch office, helping to create a localized political identity and association with a national identity.

I am in agreement with Comaroff (1996) when contributing to the globalization debate, who sees cultural homogenization and localism as "complementary sides of a single historical movement" (1996:174). He argues that:

> if anthropology has demonstrated anything at all over the past decades, it is that there is no such thing as a universal symbol or image – notwithstanding the fact that ever more symbols and images circulate throughout the universe. Denotation may be global. But connotation is always local: meaning is never inherent in signs, it is always filtered through a culturally endowed eye or ear. [1996:147]

In the case of the ICC-AK, that meaning is based on shared Inuit cultural symbols at both the national and the transnational levels. The meanings they express through "unity within diversity", "consensus", and "diplomacy" may be transnationally derived, but are influenced by a local interpretation and expression.

As Comaroff notes, even in a contemporary globalized world, there remains a nationalist consciousness (1996:163). This sentiment is echoed by an ICC Executive Council member when discussing "unity within diversity" who notes that there remain strong national and local ties among the various ICC branch offices, even though they unite transnationally under the ICC organization.

Furthermore, the continued importance of nationally demarcated borders and their impact on local political identity highlights the necessity of the state to facilitate productive relationships with Inuit. State policy concerning sovereignty should recognize that although Inuit identify politically across national borders, as in the case of the ICC, they also identify locally with political structures. Human rights issues, such as self-determination, need to be addressed at the local level, as that is where they manifest. Each ICC national office not only negotiates global political systems to achieve their goals, but also must deal directly with the state in order to gain support for their initiatives and realize a balanced relationship between the nation-state and the local people.

Notwithstanding increased globalization, the nation-state remains an influential factor in political identity, specifically in Inuit political identity. It is not surprising that, like the Saami of Scandinavia, the Inuit maintain a relationship with the nation-states they inhabit and exhibit nationalistic identity that dictates various responses to their political and cultural initiatives. We should be asking how Indigenous cultures connect across national borders and how those connections impact their relationship with their local

nation-states. How "connected" are these groups? What unites them? And, does a nationalistic sentiment remain a factor with national Indigenous groups? The ICC-AK case can help answer these questions. The ICC-AK's political ideologies of "unity within diversity", "consensus", and "diplomacy" are the mechanisms that unite this particular organization, while also highlighting the potential for nationalist identity. The embracing of a shared culture pre-dating the rise of nation-states, and similar experiences with colonialism, create the foundation for a transnational Inuit political identity, which supports the idea of Indigenous transnational processes at work. The tensions involved in negotiating consensus between all branches, and the way that diplomacy shapes the ICC-AK relationship with state and national institutions can show how nation-states help to shape Indigenous political identity.

The themes also hint at how we find today the prominence of Inuit on the world stage and the awareness of the political activities they engage in locally and globally. It is in the image they embrace and put forth of a united Inuit seeking to reach consensus among different stakeholders to see that the circumpolar region, their homeland, is protected from further damage and encroachment on their livelihoods. The divergent Inuit cultural branches and various nationalities are less important to the ICC than the need to present an organization strengthened by solidarity to the international community.

Each of the above themes in some way speaks to the involvement of the nation-state in Inuit political identity, either as a political entity to contend with or as an element shaping political identity. The preceding discussion shows the pervasiveness of the

nation-state with regard to political identity. While some scholars see the deterritorialization of ethnoscapes allowing for movements of culture across national borders without impediment (Appadurai 1996), others see the importance in exploring anthropology of borders (Wilson and Donnan 1998). The nation-state is explored by a variety of scholars concerned with transnational processes, and the divide seems to occur at the point of the importance of the nation-state with regard to transnational processes.

It is my opinion that nationalism and state authority remain prominent features in a globalized world, and impact transnational connections. I believe anthropology can benefit from a transnational understanding of the interplay between Indigenous NGOs and the state. I propose that further ethnographic research can illuminate the role of the nation-state in transnational processes of identity construction, potentially influencing decisions pertaining to Indigenous peoples, promoting self-determination at the local levels. This fieldwork lacks any substantial discussion of how individuals within the ICC or those outside conceptualize the organization. Through out this research it became apparent that there are conflicting views of ICC, from environmental organization, to NGO, and governmental bodies, there are various opinions of what ICC does and stands for. I suspect opinions may vary within ICC as well, as is hinted at in this work.

The three-month research period restricts the spatial-temporal distance that a longer period, of say a year, would have provided. The greater geographic and time space allows the research to gain a perspective not possible after such a short period and scope. Greater time and distance would allow certain aspects of the research to be

presented in this work, with more people contributing to the knowledge anonymity stands a better chance of being preserved. Furthermore, with an understanding that fieldwork is based on a particular period in time, the specific details of the instances I draw on are less relevant than the overall benefit gained from a broader understanding of events. That being said, this project could have been enhanced by certain actions.

The work contained herein would have benefited from the inclusion of participant observation at the village level. An exploration of village-level identities and the interrelations with the Alaska ICC branch could have revealed more facets of Indigenous political identity construction, producing a more complete understanding of the phenomenon. The same could be said for spending time in the other branch offices, which would allow for comparison, potentially creating greater ethnographic depth. Perhaps a year-long research project with the various ICC stakeholders would facilitate a more complete comprehension of the research question. As it stands, this work only highlights the perspective of one stakeholder, the ICC-AK.

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# Appendix 1

Sample Interview Script

Inuit Political Identity and Transnational Processes

Preliminary Interview Script

Thank you for taking part in this project. Your contribution is valuable and greatly appreciated. I will be asking a series of questions relating to two predominant themes: the first will be concerned with the Inuit Circumpolar Council in Alaska (ICC-AK) and its relationship with the other member nation's offices; the second will explore the role of cultural political identity and ICC-AK.

As someone who works with the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC-AK), what is your role? Can you tell me a bit about how the Inuit Circumpolar Conference came about? Were these newly created ties, or do these connections pre-date colonialism? As an organization with grassroots offices in Greenland, Canada, Russia (Siberia), and U.S.A. (Alaska), in your view, how do these multiple national locations work together? How do the cross-national networks that ICC-AK utilizes impact Inuit political identity locally (Probe for a sense of strengthening or weakening of political identity)? It will be helpful to understand the relationship between the ICC-AK and the State, in your experience, how responsive is the State to the issues that ICC-AK supports? Do the other international offices also work to support local initiatives within the non-U.S.A. member nations? I would now like to turn to the issue of Inuit culture and the ICC-AK.

Can you tell me which international Indigenous initiatives or meetings you take part in as a representative of ICC-AK? Specifically, I am wondering about any initiatives or meetings you have attended that involve other non-Inuit Indigenous movements, anything to do with the United Nations, and/or other global organizations. With regard to the role Inuit culture has in promoting Inuit specific initiatives, in what way does Inuit culture embody what ICC-AK wishes to represented to non-Inuit societies? The conference held every four years by the Inuit Circumpolar council must offer an opportunity to re-connect with the other nation members, could you tell me about your experiences attending the Inuit Circumpolar Conference? How is cross-national Inuit culture expressed during the conference? Finally, in your view, how does the cross-national Inuit culture work to promote Inuit political initiatives?

Once again, thank you for assisting with this research project. Your responses have been very helpful and will assist in a broader understanding of the relationship between Inuit political identity and transnational processes.

# Appendix 2

Institutional Review Board Exemption Letter:

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

(907) 474-7800
(907) 474-5444 fax
fyirb@uaf.edu
www.uaf.edu/irb

**Institutional Review Board**
909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

May 6, 2011

| | |
|---|---|
| To: | Peter Schweitzer, Ph.D.<br>Principal Investigator |
| From: | University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB |
| Re: | [224047-1] Inuit Political Identity and Transnational Processes |

Thank you for submitting the New Project referenced below. The submission was handled by Exempt Review. The Office of Research Integrity has determined that the proposed research qualifies for exemption from the requirements of 45 CFR 46. This exemption does not waive the researchers' responsibility to adhere to basic ethical principles for the responsible conduct of research and discipline specific professional standards.

| | |
|---|---|
| Title: | Inuit Political Identity and Transnational Processes |
| Received: | April 14, 2011 |
| Exemption Category: | 2 |
| Effective Date: | May 6, 2011 |

Required revisions:

1. Please attach a Research Personnel List in the revised IRBNet package.

2. In Data storage section, please provide the building and room number where data will be stored for the life of the project.

This action is included on the April 28, 2011 IRB Agenda.

*Prior to making substantive changes to the scope of research, research tools, or personnel involved on the project, please contact the Office of Research Integrity to determine whether or not additional review is required. Additional review is not required for small editorial changes to improve the clarity or readability of the research tools or other documents.*

# Appendix 3

Informed Consent Form:

**Informed Consent Form**

**Title of Project: Inuit Political Identity and Transnational Processes**

**IRB#: 224047-2**

**Date Approved: May 25, 2011**

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

**Description of the Study:**

You are being asked to participate in a study exploring how the local Alaska branch of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC-AK) connect to a broader transnational Indigenous network, and how those networks affect Inuit/Iñupiat political identity? Moreover, this study will look at how culture impacts, and is impacted, by these transnational political networks. This interview is being conducted as part of a Master's degree research project to begin summer 2011.

**What Will I Be Asked To Do?**

Your participation in the study will involve taking part in an interview in which you will be asked questions related to your experiences with the ICC-AK. In particular I am interested in the characteristics of your relationship with ICC-AK, the transnational connections ICC-AK has with the cross-national ICC headquarters, the role that Inuit culture plays in these networks, and how these elements impact Inuit political identity. The interview will take between 1 to 2 hours.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time without any penalty to you.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The risks to you if you take part in this study are minimal. All responses are voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

**Photography, Audio and Video Recording**

With your permission audio, photos and/or video recordings will be taken to be used as part of a Master's degree research project. It should be noted that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed with regard to photographs and video recording.

**Confidentiality:**

If you wish, all of your responses will be anonymous. With your permission I would like to tape record our interview. You can tell us if you do not want to be tape recorded.

Specific quotes that exemplify a point may be used. However, the quote will be written so that you are not identifiable.

Transcribed interviews will be retained for a 7-year period on my password protected hard drive. At some point during the interview if you wish to withdraw, the interview will immediately end; but all information collected to that point will still be used in the analysis of all data collected, unless you wish to withdraw completely.

***Signatures (written consent)***

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this wave your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions form their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name (please print) Cori Bender

Researcher's Signature _____ Date: _____

**Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Cori Bender, Researcher
Master's Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks
(907) 347-7616
cdbender@alaska.edu

Dr. Peter Schweitzer, Advisor
Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks
(907) 474-5015
ppschweitzer@alaska.edu

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

# Appendix 4

ICC Research Confirmation Email



Cori Bender <coribender81@gmail.com>

**Confirming email**

**Kelly Eningowuk** <kelly@iccalaska.org> Mon, Apr 4, 2011 at 12:01 PM
To: Cori Bender <coribender81@gmail.com>
Cc: James Stotts <jimmy@iccalaska.org>

Hi Cori,

Good news! I spoke with Jimmy Stotts (ICC AK President) and we have agreed to partner with you in your research project. We would like to discuss your project further and see exactly what your needs are from our organization. Like I mentioned in our meeting, unfortunately we are not able to accommodate your request to serve as an intern during the summer in our office due to limited office space at this time. We hope that this will not be a problem and you will be able to working something else out.

Lets plan another meeting soon. What is your research timeline? Jimmy's schedule is extremely busy for the next couple of months but I would like to find some time for him to meet you and learn more about your research.

I will look forward to hearing back from you

Thanks,

Kelly

Kelly Eningowuk

Executive Director

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